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THE ROMANCES OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

THE CHEVALIER D'HARMENTAL

The Regency Romances

V. I

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dinner-table any gentleman who neglected the duties enjoined by the Church, and rewarded piety with blue ribbons, invitations to Marly, governments, pensions, and regiments. Forthwith Versailles became, in everything but dress, a convent. The pulpits and confessionals were surrounded by swords and embroidery. The Marshals of France were much in prayer; and there was hardly one among the dukes and peers who did not carry good little books in his pocket, fast during Lent, and communicate at Easter. Madame de Maintenon, who had a great share in the blessed work, boasted that devotion had become quite the fashion."

But Louis XIV. died. His will was treated with scant ceremony by the Parliament of Paris; his legitimized sons were pulled down from the height to which he, with the cordial approval of their former governess, Madame de Maintenon, had elevated them; and Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, whose private morals were the very antithesis of all that had been held in high esteem at court for a generation, was placed at the head of the government during the minority of the young king.

The many excellent qualities of the regent were overshadowed, in his own day as they have been for posterity, by the shameless profligacy of his life.

When the royal power, substantially unlimited, was placed in his hands, the whole face of the court changed; and unblushing debauchery succeeded to the odor of sanctity which had so long filled the nostrils of the courtiers. Madame de Maintenon was discredited; Père le Tellier, the bigoted confessor of the late king, vanished from the public gaze; while those whose real or pretended piety had led them to espouse the cause of the Duc du Maine as against the regent, had nothing to hope for under the new administration. Add to this that the father, mother, and brother of the child who had become king had all died within a week of one another some three years before; that his own life had been saved at the same time only by a miracle, and that very many people, under the guidance of a few who pretended to believe it, honestly did believe that the Duc d'Orléans was responsible for all these casualties; while the throne of Spain was filled by a grandson of Louis XIV., himself a candidate for the regency, bitterly jealous of the regent, and an inevitable candidate for the throne in case of the death of the sickly child, whose life was supposed to be in hourly danger. To be sure, by the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, Philippe V. solemnly renounced all claim to the throne of France; but the emptiness of such

renunciations had been abundantly demonstrated in the case of his great-grandmother, Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII., and his grandmother, Marie Thérèse, wife of Louis XIV.; and even Saint-Simon, the most devoted of all the friends of the regent, tells us in his Memoirs that if Louis XV. had died he should have been obliged, tearfully and with great regret, to espouse the cause of the representative of the elder line. Under these circumstances, some sort of a plot against the government of the regent was inevitable. The so-called "Conspiracy of Cellamare," formed to carry out a far-reaching scheme of the ambitious and restless intriguer, Cardinal Alberoni, the all-powerful minister of Philippe V., forms the ground-work upon which Dumas has built the "Chevalier d'Harmental."

That the epithet "far-reaching" is not misapplied to the scheme of the ex-bell-ringer of Parma, will be apparent upon perusal of the objects he had in view, which are set forth with fulness and accuracy in the following pages; but the *dénouement* contained many elements of burlesque. Indeed, despite the undoubted earnestness of the Duchesse du Maine and the poisoned pen of the atrabilious poet, La Grange Chancel, the "Court" of Sceaux, with its "Order of the Honey-Bee," was a burlesque in itself, and the conspirators at the French end were

mere playthings in the hands of the clever and unscrupulous Dubois. It is a curious fact that the Duchess, who was a legitimate princess of the blood (she and her sister were called "dolls of the blood" in allusion to their diminutive size), was the life and soul of a plot to elevate the late king's illegitimate progeny over the heads of the legitimate princes, while her husband, the principal beneficiary of the plot, was very lukewarm in forwarding it. and had to be continually urged on by her. It is said that while Louis XIV. was at the point of death, the Duc du Maine persisted in neglecting his own interests to devote himself to a translation of Lucretius, so that his wife said to him contemptuously: "You will wake some fine morning to find yourself a member of the Academy, and the Duc d'Orléans Regent of France."

For the character of the Duc du Maine it is hard to feel any emotion but contempt; while it is equally hard to avoid feeling something like sympathy for the perpetual disappointments of his restless, intriguing little wife. Her character is best studied in the extremely entertaining memoirs of Mademoiselle de Launay, better known as Madame de Staal, but who must not be confounded with the more celebrated Madame de Staël (Mademoiselle Necker) of the Revolution.

There is, indeed, no other source from which so much information as to the inside workings of the "Conspiracy of Cellamare" can be obtained. "Little" de Launay was an extremely clever young woman, and when the bubble burst, she abundantly justified the confidence the conspirators had placed in her discretion. It is evident from her own naïve disclosures that the old Abbé Chaulieu was not the only one of the "Knights of the Honey-Bee" who offered love to her; but he was so old that his ardent passion was a fair theme of gossip and pleasantry. "The abbé often proposed to make me handsome presents," she says, "in addition to the incense he poured out at my feet. Being somewhat annoyed one day by his persistence in urging me to accept a thousand pistoles, I said to him: 'As a mark of my gratitude for your generous offers I give you this advice: don't make similar ones to many women or you may find one who will take you at your word.' 'Oh!' said he, 'I know whom I am dealing with.' This naïve response made me laugh."

The finishing touch was put, to the exasperation of Madame du Maine, by the outcome of the famous Bed of Justice of August, 1718, which is referred to

ıas. Her appeals to Alberoni for a speedy

g of operations became frantic; and the

negotiations through Cellamare were rapidly drawing to a point, when Dubois thought fit to show his hand, and the farce was at an end. That the brewing of the conspiracy had long been known to Dubois admits of little doubt; the circumstances which immediately led to the pricking of the bubble have been variously related.

Voltaire (Précis du Siècle de Louis XV.) gives the credit of putting Dubois upon the scent to La Fillon, "a courtesan who had risen from the lowest slums to become a celebrated procuress. She had long been in the pay of Dubois, who had recently become Secretary for Foreign Affairs." As told by Voltaire, the responsibility for the premature disclosure rests with the Abbé de Porto-Carrero, an attaché of the Spanish Embassy and an habitué of the establishment of La Fillon, where certain papers were filched from him as he was on the point of setting out for Spain. The papers were handed over to Dubois, by whose orders Porto-Carrero was pursued and overtaken at Poitiers. All his papers were seized, with the result described by Dumas. The Fillon incident is rejected by M. Henri Martin, but is accepted by Michelet; it is mentioned in all the contemporary memoirs, too; and as Voltaire was in Paris at the time, there seems to be good reason to believe that it rests

upon a foundation of fact. There is also excellent authority for the Buvat incident, substantially as here related. Jean Buvat was a clerk at the Bibliothèque, who eked out his very slender pay by copying. He was the author of certain memoirs which exist only in manuscript, but are deemed of much value by historical writers, especially as to the exciting scenes incident to the rise and progress of the "Mississippi" scheme and the financial "system" of John Law.

The customary accuracy of the gifted author, both in the delineation of character and the relation of incident, is to be noted in the "Chevalier d'Harmental." With the exception of the hero himself and Bathilde, and the scenes which deal with their mutual attachment, hardly a person is mentioned who was not a prominent figure of the time; hardly an event, however trivial, is referred to which did not actually happen.

In Madame de Staal-de Launay's entertaining pages, we meet Malezieux, Brigaud, Pompadour, Baron de Valef (Walef), the Comte de Laval, and "le beau Cardinal de Polignac," who continued to conspire for many years afterward whenever he saw a chance.

During the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, there was no time when Richelieu, the

fribble, failed to occupy a prominence which was as absurd as it was humiliating to the court which permitted it. While he was confined in the Bastille (for the third time) for his idiotic share in the Cellamare affair, he was visited by two royal princesses, disguised as laundresses, — Mademoiselle de Charolais, a descendant of the great Condé, and Mademoiselle de Valois, the regent's daughter. The latter was finally married to the Duke of Modena to remove her from the sphere of Richelieu's influence. It is said that she voluntarily exposed herself to infection from the small-pox to escape the distasteful match; but she was at last compelled to leave France. She gave vent to her sentiments in the following punning verses: —

"J'épouse un des plus petits princes,
Maître des très-petits états,
Quatre desquels ne vaudraient pas
Une de nos moindres provinces.
Nul jeu: finance très-petite:
Quelle différence, grand Dieu!
Entre ce triste et *pauvre lieu*,
Et le *riche lieu* que je quitte!"

It should perhaps be noticed that the author has somewhat ante-dated the elevation of Dubois to the archbishopric of Cambrai, which did not actually take place until 1720. The necessary preliminaries to his elevation, arising from the facts that he was

not in holy orders and was a married man, were accomplished as described. The Comte de Nocé, who stood closest to the regent of all the *roués*, said to him, apropos of this appointment: "What! That man Archbishop of Cambrai! Why, you told me yourself that he was a miserable, worthless, unbelieving dog."

"So he is," said the regent, "and that's just the reason why I have made the appointment; when he's an archbishop he will have to go to communion."

While there is much in the character of the Duc d'Orléans which merits the severest condemnation and little to command actual respect, his vices were after all those of a deplorably weak rather than a wicked man. It can fairly be said that he never purposely injured a human being; and history furnishes ample justification for relieving the gloomy picture of his slavish subserviency to his own passions and to the will of his crafty minister and ex-preceptor, by ascribing to him such generous deeds as that with which this story closes.

LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1718.

Louis XV., at the age of nine.

Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, his uncle, the Regent of France.

Duchesse d'Orléans, his wife.

Madame Elizabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine, the Regent's mother.

Duchesse de Berri,
Louise-Adelaide d'Orléans,
Mademoiselle de Chartres,
Mademoiselle Aglaé de Valois,
Princess Louise, afterward Queen of Spain,
Mademoiselle Elizabeth, afterward Duchesse de Lorraine,
} the Regent's daughters.

Abbé Dubois, the Regent's Minister of State.

André Hercule de Fleury, Archbishop of Fréjus, preceptor to the young King.

Madame de Maintenon.

Duke of Berwick, Lieutenant-General of the French armies.

Adrien Maurice, Duc de Noailles, President of the Council of Finance.

Maréchal d'Uxelles, President of the Council of Foreign Affairs.

Duc d'Antin, Superintendent of Ships.

Bishop of Troyes.

Bishop of Nantes.

M. de Launay, Governor of the Bastille.

Prince de Condé,
Louis Henri, Duc de Bourbon,
Duc de Saint-Simon,
Louis Alexandre de Bourbon,
Comte de Toulouse,
Duc de Laforce,
Chevalier de Ravanne,
Marquis de Lavrillière,
Marquis d'Effiat,
Marquis de Torcy,
Maréchal de Villars,
Maréchal d'Estrées,
Maréchal de Bezons,
Marquis de Canillac,
Chevalier de Simiane,
Comte de Fargy,
Duc de Guiche,
Comte de Nocé,
Duc de Brancas,
Marquis de Broglie,
Marquis de Parabère,
Comte de Gacé,
M. Leblanc,
} gentlemen of the French Court.

Messire Voyer d'Argenson, Lieutenant of Police.
Marquis de Lafare, Captain of the Guards.
Monsieur d'Artagnan, Captain of the Gray Musketeers.
Marquis de Sabran, maître-d'-hôtel to the Regent.

Marquise de Parabère,
Duchesse de Falaris,
Madame Sophie d'Averne,
Marquise de Sabran,
Mademoiselle Saleri,
Madame de Tencin,
Mademoiselle de Charolais,
} ladies of the French Court.

Madame de Mouchy, lady of honor to Duchesse de Berri.
Madame de Pons, tire-woman to Duchesse de Berri

PHILIP V. of Spain,
CARDINAL ALBERONI,
MONSIEUR LE DUC DU MAINE, son of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan,
LOUISE BÉNÉDICTE DE CONDÉ, Duchesse du Maine,
CARDINAL MELCHIOR DE POLIGNAC,
LOUIS FRANÇOIS ARMAND DU PLESSIS, DUC DE RICHELIEU,
MARQUIS DE POMPADOUR,
MONSIEUR DE MALEZIEU, Chancellor of Dombes and Lord of Chatenay,
PRINCE DE CELLAMARE, the Spanish Ambassador,
MARÉCHAL DE VILLEROY,
MADEMOISELLE SOPHIE DE LAUNAY,
COMTE DE LAVAL,
JOSEPH DE LAGRANGE-CHANCEL, a satirical poet,
M. DE SAINT-GENEST, a poet,
ABBÉ DE CHAULIEU,
} conspirators against the Regent.

M. DE SAINT-AULAIRE,
M. ANTOINE DE CHASTELLUX,
MADAME LA MARÉCHALE DE VILLEROY,
MADAME DE CHANOST,
MADAME DE BRISSAC,
MADAME DE ROHAN,
MADAME DE CROISSY,
D'AVRANCHES, valet-de-chambre to Madame du Maine,
ABBÉ BRIGAUD,
M. DE BESSAC, an ensign in the Guards of Duc du Maine,
CHEVALIER RAOUL D'HARMENTAL, in love with Bathilde,
BARON RENÉ DE VALEF, his friend,

CAUCHEREAU, a tenor of the Académie Royal, favorite of Mademoiselle de Chartres.
MONSIEUR DE RIOM, favorite of La Duchesse de Berri.
MADEMOISELLE BURY, of the Opera.
ALBERT DU ROCHER, an officer in the service of Duc d'Orléans.
CLARICE DU ROCHER, his wife.
BATHILDE, their daughter, in love with the Chevalier d'Harmental
JEAN BUVAT, an employee in the government library.
MONSIEUR DUCONDRAY, his colleague.
NANETTE, Bathilde's servant.
MAÎTRE DURAND, a restaurant-keeper.
RAFFÉ, valet-de-chambre to M. le Duc de Richelieu.
BOURGUINON, COMTOIS, } in the service of the Abbé Dubois.
MADAME DENIS, a lodging-house keeper.
MADEMOISELLE ÉMILIE, MADEMOISELLE ATHENAISE, } her daughters.
BONIFACE DENIS, her son.
MONSIEUR FREMOND, a lodger at the house of Madame Denis.
LA FILLON.
LA NORMANDIE.
CAPTAIN ROQUEFINETTE, an adventurer.

LE CHEVALIER D'HARMENTAL.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN ROQUEFINETTE.

On the 22d of March, in the year of our Lord 1718, a young cavalier of high bearing, about twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, mounted on a pure-bred Spanish charger, was waiting, toward eight o'clock in the morning, at that end of the Pont Neuf which abuts on the Quai de l'École. He was so upright and firm in his saddle that one might have imagined him to have been placed there as a sentinel by the lieutenant-general of police, Messire Voyer d'Argenson. After waiting about half an hour, during which time he impatiently examined the clock of the Samaritaine, his glance, wandering till then, appeared to rest with satisfaction on an individual who, coming from the Place Dauphine, turned to the right and advanced toward him.

The man who thus attracted the attention of the young chevalier was a powerfully built fellow of five feet ten, wearing, instead of a peruke, a forest of his own black hair, slightly grizzled, dressed in a manner half bourgeois, half military, ornamented with a shoulder-knot which had once been crimson, but from exposure to sun and rain had become of a dirty orange-color. He was armed with a

long sword slung in a belt, which bumped ceaselessly against the calves of his legs. Finally, he wore a hat which once had been adorned with a plume and with lace, and which — in remembrance, no doubt, of its past splendor — its owner had tipped so far over his left ear that it seemed as if it could be kept in place only by a miracle of equilibrium. There was altogether in the countenance and in the carriage and bearing of the man (who seemed from forty to forty-five years of age, and who advanced swaggering and keeping the middle of the road, curling his mustache with one hand, and with the other signing to the carriages to give place) such a character of insolent carelessness that the cavalier who watched him smiled involuntarily as he murmured to himself, "I believe this is my man."

In view of this probability, he rode straight up to the new-comer, with the evident intention of speaking to him. The latter, though he evidently did not know the cavalier, seeing that he was going to address him, advanced his right foot in the third position, and waited, one hand on his sword and the other on his mustache, to hear what the person who was coming up had to say to him.

As the man with the orange ribbon had foreseen, the young cavalier stopped his horse near him, and touching his hat, "Monsieur," said he, "I think I may conclude, from your appearance and manner, that you are a gentleman; am I mistaken?"

"No, *palsambleu!*" replied he to whom this strange question was addressed, touching his hat in his turn. "I am delighted that my appearance speaks so well for me, for however improbable it may seem to you that the title should be mine, you may call me captain."

"I am enchanted to find that you are a soldier, Monsieur," said the chevalier, bowing again. "It gives me

the greater assurance that you are incapable of leaving a brave man in distress."

"He is welcome, provided always the brave man has no need of my purse; for I confess frankly that I have just left my last crown in a cabaret on the Port de la Tournelle."

"Nobody wants your purse, Captain; on the contrary, I beg you to believe that mine is at your disposal."

"To whom have I the honor to speak?" asked the captain, visibly touched by this reply; "and in what can I oblige you?"

"I am the Baron René de Valef," replied the cavalier.

"I think," interrupted the captain, "that I knew, in the Flemish wars, a family of that name."

"It was my family; we are from Liège." The two speakers exchanged bows.

"You must know, then," continued the Baron de Valef, "that the Chevalier Raoul d'Harmental, one of my most intimate friends, last night in my company engaged in a quarrel, which is to be finished this morning by a meeting. Our adversaries were three, and we but two. I went this morning to the houses of the Marquis de Gacé and the Comte de Surgis, but unfortunately neither of them had spent the night in his bed; so as the affair could not wait, since I must set out in two hours for Spain, and as we absolutely require a second, or rather a third, I installed myself on the Pont Neuf with the intention of addressing the first gentleman who should approach. You came, and I addressed myself to you."

"And you have done right, *pardieu!* rest satisfied, Baron, I am your man. What hour is fixed for the meeting?"

"Half-past nine this morning."

"Where will it take place?"

"At the Maillot gate."

"*Diable!* there is no time to lose. But you are on horseback and I am on foot; how shall we manage that?"

"There is a way, Captain."

"What is it?"

"It is that you should do me the honor of mounting behind me."

"Willingly, Baron."

"I warn you, however," added the young cavalier, with a slight smile, "that my horse is rather spirited."

"Oh, I know him!" said the captain, drawing back a step, and looking at the beautiful animal with the eye of a connoisseur; "if I am not mistaken, he was bred between the mountains of Grenada and the Sierra Morena. I rode a horse like that at Almanza; and I have often made him lie down like a sheep when he wanted to carry me off at a gallop, only by pressing him with my knees."

"You reassure me. To horse, then, Captain."

"Here I am, Baron."

And without using the stirrup, which the young cavalier left free for him, with a single bound the captain sprang onto the croup.

The baron had spoken truly; his horse was not accustomed to so heavy a load, and at once he attempted to get rid of it. Neither had the captain exaggerated, and the animal soon found that he had to do with those who were stronger than he; so that after a few leaps, which had no other effect than to show to the passers-by the address of the two cavaliers, he became obedient, and went at a swinging trot down the Quai de l'École, which at that time was nothing but a wharf, crossed at the same pace the Quai du Louvre and the Quai des Tuileries, through the gate of the Conference, and leaving on the left the

road to Versailles, threaded the great avenue of the Champs Élysées, which now leads to the triumphal Arc de l'Étoile. Arrived at the Pont d'Antin, the Baron de Valef slackened his horse's pace a little, for he found that he had ample time to arrive at the Maillot gate at the appointed time.

The captain profited by this respite. "Now, Monsieur," said he, "may I, without indiscretion, ask why we are going to fight? I wish, you understand, to know that, in order to regulate my conduct toward my adversary, and to judge whether it is worth while to kill him."

"That is only fair," answered the baron; "I will tell you everything as it occurred. We were supping last night at La Fillon's. Of course you know La Fillon, Captain?"

"*Pardieu!* it was I who started her in the world, in 1705, before my Italian campaigns."

"Well," replied the baron, laughing, "you may boast of a pupil who does you honor. Briefly, I supped there tête-à-tête with D'Harmental."

"Without any one of the fair sex?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes. I must tell you that D'Harmental is a kind of Trappist, only going to La Fillon's for fear of the reputation of not going there; loving only one woman at a time, and in love for the moment with the little D'Averne, the wife of the lieutenant of the guards."

"Very good!"

"We were there, chatting, when we heard a merry party enter the room next to ours. As our conversation did not concern anybody else, we kept silence, and without intending it, heard the conversation of our neighbors. Now see what chance is! our neighbors talked of the only thing which we ought not to have heard."

"Of the chevalier's mistress?"

"Exactly. At the first words of their discourse which reached me, I rose and tried to get Raoul away; but instead of following me, he put his hand on my shoulder, and made me sit down again. 'Then Philippe is making love to the little D'Averne?' said one. 'Since the fête of the Maréchale d'Estrées, where, disguised as Venus, she gave him a sword-belt with some verses, in which she compared him to Mars,' replied another voice. 'But that is eight days ago,' said a third. 'Yes,' replied the first. 'Oh! she made a kind of resistance, either because she really held by poor D'Harmental, or because she knew that the regent likes only those who resist him. At last, this morning, in exchange for a basketful of flowers and jewels, she has consented to receive his Highness this evening.'"

"Ah!" said the captain, "I begin to understand; the chevalier got angry?"

"Exactly. Instead of laughing, as you or I would have done, and profiting by this circumstance to get back his brevet of colonel, which was taken from him under pretext of economy, D'Harmental became so pale that I thought he was going to faint; then, approaching the partition, and striking with his fist, to insure silence, 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I am sorry to contradict you, but the one who said that Madame d'Averne had granted a rendezvous to the regent, or to any other, told a lie.'

"'It is I, Monsieur, who said it, and who repeat it,' said a voice on the other side; 'and if in that there is anything displeasing to you, my name is Lafare, captain of the guards.' 'And mine, Fargy,' said a second voice. 'And mine, Ravanne,' said a third. 'Very well, gentlemen,' replied D'Harmental; 'to-morrow, from nine to half-past, at the Maillot gate.' And he sat down again opposite me. They talked of something else, and we finished our

supper. That is the whole affair, Captain, and you now know as much as I."

The captain uttered a kind of exclamation which seemed to say, "This is not very serious;" but in spite of this semi-disapprobation of the chevalier's sensitiveness, he resolved none the less to support, to the best of his power, the cause of which he had so unexpectedly been made the champion, however defective that cause might appear to him in principle; besides, even had he wished to draw back, it was now too late. They arrived at the Maillot gate, and a young cavalier, who appeared to be waiting, and who had from a distance perceived the baron and the captain, put his horse to the gallop, and approached rapidly; this was the Chevalier d'Harmental.

"My dear Chevalier," said the Baron de Valef, grasping his hand, "permit me, in default of an old friend, to present to you a new one. Neither Surgis nor Gacé was at home. I met this gentleman on the Pont Neuf, and told him our embarrassment, and he offered himself to free us from it, with the greatest good-will."

"I am doubly grateful to you, then, my dear Valef," replied the chevalier, casting on the captain a look which betrayed a slight astonishment. "And to you, Monsieur," he continued, "I must excuse myself for making your acquaintance by mixing you up thus with an unpleasant affair. But you will afford me one day or another an opportunity to return your kindness, and I hope and beg that, an opportunity arising, you will dispose of me as I have disposed of you."

"Well said, Chevalier," replied the captain, leaping to the ground; "and in speaking thus, you might lead me to the end of the world. The proverb is right, — 'It is only mountains that don't meet.'"

"Who is this original?" asked D'Harmental of Valef,

while the captain stamped the calls with his right foot, to stretch his legs.

"Faith, I don't know," said Valef; "but I know that we should be in a great difficulty without him. Some poor officer of fortune, without doubt, whom the peace has thrown aside like so many others; but we will judge him by-and-by, by his works."

"Well!" said the captain, becoming animated with the exercise he was taking, "where are our coxcombs? I find myself in good trim this morning."

"When I came up to you," replied D'Harmental, "they had not arrived, but I perceived at the end of the avenue a kind of hired carriage, which will serve as an excuse if they are late; and indeed," added the chevalier, pulling out a beautiful watch set with diamonds, "they are not behind time, for it is hardly half-past nine."

"Let us go," said Valef, dismounting and throwing the reins to D'Harmental's valet; "for if they arrive at the rendezvous while we stand gossiping here, it will appear as though we had kept them waiting."

"You are right," said D'Harmental; and dismounting, he advanced toward the entrance of the wood, followed by his two companions.

"Will you not take anything, gentlemen?" said the landlord of the restaurant, who was standing at his door, waiting for custom.

"Yes, Maître Durand," replied D'Harmental, who wished, in order that they might not be disturbed, to make it appear as if they had come for an ordinary walk, "breakfast for three. We are going to take a turn in the avenue, and then we shall come back." And he let three louis fall into the hands of the innkeeper.

The captain saw the glitter of the three gold-pieces one after another, and quickly reckoned up what might be

had at the "Bois de Boulogne" for seventy-two francs; but as he knew with whom he had to deal, he judged that a little advice from him would not be useless. Consequently, in his turn approaching the *maître d'hôtel*, "Listen, my friend," said he; "you know that I understand the price of things, and that no one can deceive me about the amount of a tavern bill. Let the wines be good and varied, and let the breakfast be copious, or I will break your head! Do you understand?"

"Be easy, Captain," answered Durand, "it is not a customer like you whom I would try to deceive."

"All right; I have eaten nothing for twelve hours. Arrange accordingly."

The hotel-keeper bowed, as knowing what that meant, and went back to his kitchen, beginning to think that he had in hand a less profitable affair than at first he had hoped it would be.

As to the captain, after making a final gesture of warning, half amicable, half threatening, he quickened his pace, and rejoined the chevalier and the baron, who had stopped to wait for him.

The chevalier was not wrong in regard to the hired carriage. At the turn of the first alley he saw his three adversaries getting out of it. They were, as we have already said, the Marquis de Lafare, the Comte de Fargy, and the Chevalier de Ravanne.

Our readers will now permit us to give them some brief details in regard to these three personages, who will often reappear in the course of this history. Lafare, the best known of the three, thanks to the poetry which he has left behind him, was a man about thirty-six or thirty-eight years of age, of a frank and open countenance, and an inexhaustible gayety and good-humor, — always ready to engage with all comers, at table, at play, or at arms, and

that without malice or bitterness; much run after by the fair sex, and much beloved by the regent, who had named him his captain of the Guards, and who, during the ten years in which he had admitted him into his intimacy, had found him his rival sometimes, but his faithful servant always. Thus the prince, who had the habit of giving nicknames to all his boón companions, as well as to his mistresses, never called him by any other than "bon enfant." Nevertheless, for some time the popularity of Lafare, established as it was by favoring antecedents, was fast diminishing among the ladies of the court and the girls of the opera. There was a report current that he was going to be so ridiculous as to become a well-behaved man. It is true that some, in order to preserve for him his reputation, whispered that this apparent conversion had no other cause than the jealousy of Mademoiselle de Conti, daughter of the duchess, and granddaughter of the great Condé, who, it was said, honored the regent's captain of the Guards with a particular affection. His alliance with the Duc de Richelieu, who was supposed to be the lover of Mademoiselle de Charolais, gave consistency to this report.

The Comte de Fargy, generally called "Le Beau Fargy," by a substitution of the title which he had received from Nature for that which his fathers had left him, was referred to, as his name indicates, as the handsomest man of his time, which in that age of gallantry imposed obligations from which he had never recoiled, and in regard to which he had always acquitted himself with honor. Indeed, it was impossible to have a more perfect figure than his. At once strong and graceful, supple and active, he seemed to unite all the different perfections of the heroes of romance of that time. Add to this a charming head, combining the most opposite styles of beauty, — that

is to say, black hair and blue eyes, strongly marked features, and a complexion like that of a woman. Add also wit, loyalty, and the greatest courage, and you will have an idea of the high consideration which Le Fargy must have enjoyed in the society of that mad period.

As to the Chevalier de Ravanne, who has left us such strange memoirs of his early life that in spite of their authenticity one is tempted to believe them apocryphal, he was still but a youth ; he was rich and of noble birth, who entered into life by a golden door, and ran into all its pleasures with the fiery imprudence and eagerness of youth. He carried to excess, as so many do at eighteen, all the vices and all the virtues of his day. It will be easily understood how proud he was to serve as second to men like Lafare and Fargy in a meeting which was likely to "make a noise."

CHAPTER II.

THE MEETING.

As soon as Lafare, Fargy, and Ravanne saw their adversaries appear at the corner of the path, they walked to meet them. Arrived at ten paces from one another, they all took off their hats and bowed with that elegant politeness which was a characteristic of the aristocracy of the eighteenth century, and advanced some steps thus bareheaded with smiles on their lips, so that to the eyes of the passer-by, ignorant of the cause of their encounter, they would have appeared like friends pleased at a chance meeting.

"Gentlemen," said the Chevalier d'Harmental, to whom the first word by right belonged, "I hope that neither you nor we have been followed; but it is getting late, and we might be disturbed here. I think it would be wise in us to find a more retired spot, where we shall be more at ease to transact the little business which we have in hand."

"Gentlemen," said Ravanne, "I know one which will suit you, a hundred yards from here, — a true cover."

"Come, let us follow the child," said the captain; "innocence leads to safety."

Ravanne turned round, and examined from head to foot our friend with the yellow ribbons. "If you are not previously engaged, my strapping friend," said he, in a bantering tone, "I claim the preference."

"Wait a moment, Ravanne," interrupted Lafare; "I have some explanations to give to Monsieur d'Harmental."

"Monsieur Lafare," replied the chevalier, "your courage is so well known that the explanations you offer me are a proof of delicacy for which I thank you; but these explanations would only delay us uselessly, and we have no time to lose."

"Bravo!" cried Ravanne, "that is what I call speaking, Chevalier. As soon as we have cut each other's throats, I hope you will grant me your friendship. I have heard you much spoken of in good quarters, and have long wished to make your acquaintance."

"Come, come, Ravanne," said Fargy, "since you have undertaken to be our guide, show us the way."

Ravanne sprang into the wood like a young fawn; his five companions followed. At the end of about ten minutes' walking, during which the six adversaries had maintained the most profound silence, either from fear of being heard or from that natural feeling which in the moment of danger makes a man reflective, they found themselves in the midst of a glade, surrounded on all sides by a screen of trees.

"Well, gentlemen," said Ravanne, looking round him in a satisfied manner, "what do you say to the locality?"

"I say that if you boast of having discovered it," said the captain, "you are a strange kind of Christopher Columbus. If you had told me it was here you were coming, I could have guided you with my eyes shut."

"Well," replied Ravanne, "we will try to give you a chance to leave the place in the manner in which you would have come to it."

"It is with you that my business lies, Monsieur de Lafare," said D'Harmental, throwing his hat on the ground.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the captain of the guards, following the example of the chevalier; "and at the same

time I feel that nothing could give me more honor and more pain than a meeting with you, particularly for such a cause."

D'Harmental smiled as a man on whom this flower of politeness was not lost, but his only answer was to draw his sword.

"It appears, my dear Baron," said Fargy, addressing himself to Valef, "that you are on the point of setting out for Spain."

"I ought to have left last night, my dear Count," replied Valef; "and nothing less than the pleasure I promised myself in seeing you this morning would have detained me till now, so important is my errand."

"*Diable!* you distress me," said Fargy, drawing; "for if I should have the misfortune to retard you, you are the man to bear me deadly malice."

"Not at all. I should know that it was from pure friendship, my dear Count," replied Valef. "So do your best, I beg, and at once; I am at your orders."

"Come, then, Monsieur," said Ravanne to the captain, who was folding his coat neatly and placing it by his hat, "you see that I am waiting for you."

"Do not be impatient, my fine fellow," said the old soldier, continuing his preparations with the deliberation natural to him. "One of the most essential qualities in arms is *sang-froid*. I was like you at your age; but after the third or fourth sword-blow I received, I understood that I was on the wrong road, and I returned to the right path. There!" he added, at last drawing his sword, which we have said was of great length.

"*Peste*, Monsieur!" said Ravanne, throwing a glance on his adversary's weapon; "what a charming implement have there! It reminds me of the great spit in my r's kitchen; and I am grieved that I did not order

the *maître d'hôtel* to bring it to me, as a match to yours."

"Your mother is a worthy woman, and her kitchen is a good one; I have heard both spoken of with great praise, Monsieur le Chevalier," replied the captain, with an almost paternal manner. "I should be grieved to take you from one or the other for a trifle like that which procures me the honor of crossing swords with you. Suppose, then, that you are only taking a lesson from your fencing-master, and keep your distance."

The recommendation was useless. Ravanne was exasperated by his adversary's calmness, to which, in spite of his courage, his young and ardent blood did not allow him to attain. He attacked the captain with such fury that their swords engaged at the hilt. The captain made a step back.

"Ah, you give ground, my tall friend!" cried Ravanne.

"To give ground is not to fly, my little Chevalier," replied the captain; "that is an axiom of the art which I advise you to consider. Besides, I am not sorry to study your play. Ah, you are a pupil of Berthelot, apparently; he is a good master, but he has one great defect, — he does n't teach how to parry. Stay, look at this," he continued, replying by a thrust in *seconde* to a straight thrust; "if I had lunged, I should have spitted you like a lark."

Ravanne was furious, for he had felt on his side the point of his adversary's sword, which, however, touched him so lightly that he might have taken it for the button of a foil. His anger therefore was increased by the conviction that he owed his life to the captain; and his attacks became more frequent and furious than ever.

"Stop, stop!" said the captain; "now you are losing your head and trying to blind me. Fie, fie, young man! at the chest, *morbleu!* Ah, at the face again? you will

force me to disarm you. Again? Go and pick up your sword, young man; and come back hopping on one leg to calm yourself." And with a sudden twist he whipped Ravanne's sword out of his hand, and sent it flying some twenty paces from him.

This time Ravanne profited by the advice. He went slowly to pick up his sword, and came back slowly to the captain; but the young man was as pale as his satin vest, on which was apparent a small drop of blood. "You are right, Monsieur," said he, "and I am still but a child; but this meeting will, I hope, help to make a man of me. A few more passes, if you please, that it may not be said you have had all the honors." And he put himself on guard.

The captain was right; the chevalier needed only to be calm to be a formidable adversary. Thus, at the first thrust of this third engagement, the captain saw that he must attend solely to his own defence; but his superiority in the art of fencing was too decided for his young adversary to obtain any advantage over him. The matter ended as it was easy to foresee. The captain disarmed Ravanne a second time; but this time he went and picked up the sword himself, and with a politeness of which at first one might have supposed him incapable. "Monsieur le Chevalier," said he, extending his hand to Ravanne, "you are a brave young man; but believe in an old frequenter of schools and taverns, who was at the Flemish wars before you were born, at the Italian when you were in your cradle, and at the Spanish while you were a page. Change your master. Leave Berthelot, who has already taught you all he knows, and take Bois-Robert; and may the devil fly away with me if in six months you are not

od a fencer as myself!"

hanks for your lesson, Monsieur," said Ravanne,

taking the hand of the captain, while two tears, which he could not restrain, flowed down his cheeks; "I hope it will profit me." And receiving his sword from the captain, he did what the latter had already done with his, — he returned it to its scabbard.

They then both cast their eyes on their companions to see how they were faring. The combat was over. Lafare was seated on the ground, with his back leaning against a tree. He had been run through the body, but happily the point of the sword had struck against a rib, and had glanced along the bone, so that the wound seemed at first worse than it really was; still he had fainted, the shock had been so violent. D'Harmental was on his knees before him, endeavoring to stanch the blood with his handkerchief. Fargy and Valef had wounded each other at the same moment. One was struck in the thigh, the other run through the arm; both had apologized, promising to be friends for the future.

"Look, young man," said the captain, showing Ravanne these different episodes of the field of battle, — "look on that, and meditate. There is the blood of three brave gentlemen flowing, — probably for some worthless woman."

"Faith, Captain," answered Ravanne, quite calmed down, "I believe you are right, and that you are the only one of us all that has common-sense."

At that moment Lafare opened his eyes and recognized D'Harmental in the man who was tending him. "Chevalier," said he, "take a friend's advice; send me a surgeon whom you will find in the carriage, and whom I brought with me to provide against accident. Then go to Paris as fast as possible. Show yourself to-night at the opera ball, and if they ask you about me, say that it is a week since you have seen me. As to me, you may be entirely unconcerned. Your name shall not pass my lips; and if

you get into any unpleasant discussion with the police, let me know at once, and we will manage so that the affair shall have no consequences."

"Thanks, Monsieur le Marquis," answered D'Harmental; "I leave you, because I know you are in better hands than mine. Otherwise, believe me, nothing should have separated me from you until I had seen you in your bed."

"Pleasant journey, my dear Valef," said Fargy; "for I do not think that scratch will hinder your going. On your return, do not forget that you have a friend at No. 14 Place Louis-le-Grand."

"And you, my dear Fargy, if you have any commission for Madrid, you have but to say so, and you may rely upon its being executed with the exactitude and zeal of a true comrade." And the two friends shook hands as if nothing had happened.

"Adieu, young man, adieu," said the captain to Ravanne; "do not forget the advice which I have given you. Give up Berthelot, and take to Bois-Robert. Especially be calm, give ground when it is necessary, parry in time, and you will be one of the best fencers in the kingdom of France. My implement sends its compliments to your mother's great spit."

Ravanne, in spite of his presence of mind, could not find anything to reply to the captain; he turned away with a bow, and went to Lafare, who of the two wounded seemed the more seriously hurt.

As to D'Harmental, Valef, and the captain, they rapidly gained the path, where they found the coach, and inside, the surgeon, who was enjoying a nap. D'Harmental woke him, and showing him the way he must go, told him that the Marquis de Lafare and the Comte de Fargy had need of his services. He also ordered his valet to dismount

and follow the surgeon in order to aid him; then, turning toward the captain, "Captain," said he, "I do not think that it would be prudent to go and eat the breakfast which we have ordered; therefore receive my thanks for the assistance you have rendered me, and in remembrance of me, as it seems you are on foot, will you accept one of my two horses? You can take either of them; they are both good, and neither will fail you if you have need to go eight or ten leagues in an hour."

"Faith, Chevalier," answered the captain, casting a look on the horse which had been so generously offered to him, "there was no need for that; their blood and their purses are things which gentlemen lend one another every day. But you make the offer with so good a grace that I know not how to refuse you. If you ever have need of me for anything whatever, remember that I am at your service."

"If that should be the case, where should I find you, Monsieur?" said D'Harmental, smiling.

"I have no fixed residence, Chevalier, but you may always hear of me by going to La Fillon's and asking for La Normande, and inquiring of her for Captain Roquefinette."

And as the two young men mounted their horses, the captain also mounted, not without remarking to himself that D'Harmental had left him the best horse of the three. Then, as they were near cross-roads, each one took his own way and went off at a gallop.

The Baron de Valef re-entered by the Barrière de Passy, and returned straight to the Arsenal to receive the commissions of the Duchesse du Maine, to whose establishment he belonged, and left the same day for Spain.

Captain Roquefinette took two or three turns round the Bois de Boulogne, walking, trotting, and galloping, in

order to test the qualities of his horse; and having satisfied himself that it was, as the chevalier had told him, a fine and pure-blooded animal, he returned to Durand's hotel, where he ate, all alone, the breakfast which had been ordered for three. The same day, he took his horse to a dealer and sold it for sixty louis. It was about half what it was worth; but one must be prepared to make sacrifices if one wishes to realize promptly.

As to the Chevalier d'Harmental, he took the road to La Muette, entered Paris by the great avenue of the Champs Élysées, and on returning to his home in the Rue de Richelieu, found two letters waiting for him. One of these letters was in a handwriting so well known to him that he trembled from head to foot as he looked at it; and after having taken it up with as much hesitation as if it had been a burning coal, he opened it with a hand whose shaking betrayed the importance he attached to it. It read as follows: —

My dear Chevalier, — No one is master of his own heart, —you know that; and it is one of the misfortunes of our nature not to be able to love the same person, or the same thing, for a long time. As to myself, I wish at least to have, beyond other women, the merit of never deceiving the man who has been my lover. Do not come, then, at your accustomed hour, for you will be told that I am not at home; and I am so scrupulous that I would not willingly endanger the soul of a valet or a waiting-maid by making them tell so great a lie.

Adieu, my dear Chevalier. Do not retain too unkind a remembrance of me, and behave so that ten years hence I may still think what I think now, — that is to say, that you are one of the noblest gentlemen in France.

Sophie d'Averne.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried D'Harmental, striking his fist on a beautiful buhl table, which he smashed to bits, "if

I have killed that poor Lafare, I never shall forgive myself!"

After this outburst, which comforted him a little, the poor fellow began to walk backward and forward between the door and the window in a manner that showed that he needed still other deceptions of the same kind before he could attain to the height of moral philosophy which the faithless beauty preached to him. Then, after taking several turns, he saw the other letter, which he had entirely forgotten, lying on the floor; and still he passed by it two or three times, regarding it with a supreme indifference. At last, as if it occurred to him that it might divert his mind from the other letter, he picked it up disdainfully, opened it slowly, looked at the writing, which was unknown to him, searched for the signature, which was wanting, and with a curiosity quickened by that appearance of mystery, read as follows: —

CHEVALIER, — If you have in your mind a quarter of the romance, or in your heart half the courage, that your friends give you credit for, some one is ready to offer you an enterprise worthy of you, the result of which will be at the same time to avenge you on the man you hate most in the world, and to conduct you to a goal more brilliant than you can have hoped for in your wildest dreams. The good genius who will lead you thither by an enchanted road, and in whom you must trust entirely, will expect you this evening from twelve to two o'clock at the opera ball. If you go there unmasked, he will come to you; if you come masked, you will know him by the violet ribbon which he will wear on his left shoulder. The watch-word is "Open sesame!" Pronounce it boldly, and a cavern will open to you as wonderful as that of Ali Baba.

"Bravo!" said D'Harmental; "if the genius in the violet ribbons keeps only half his promise, by my honor he has found his man!"

CHAPTER III.

THE CHEVALIER.

The Chevalier Raoul d'Harmental, with whom, before going farther, it is necessary that our readers make a better acquaintance, was the last scion of one of the best families of Nivernais. Although that family never had played an important part in history, yet it had a degree of renown which it had acquired partly by itself, and partly by its alliances. The father of the chevalier, the Sire Gaston d'Harmental, had come to Paris in 1682, and had proved his genealogical tree from the year 1399, — an heraldic achievement which would have given some trouble to more than one duke and peer. In another direction, his maternal uncle, Monsieur de Torigny, before being named chevalier of the order in the promotion of 1694, had confessed, in order to get his sixteen quarterings recognized, that the best part of his scutcheon was that of the D'Harmentals, with whom his ancestors had been allied for three hundred years. Here, then, was enough to satisfy the aristocratic demands of the age of which we write.

The chevalier was neither poor nor rich, — that is to say, his father, when he died, had left him an estate in the environs of Nevers, which brought him in from twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand francs a year. This was enough to enable him to live well in the country; but the chevalier had received an excellent education, and was very ambitious, therefore he had at his majority, in

1711, left his home for Paris. His first visit was to the Comte de Torigny, on whom he counted to introduce him at court. Unfortunately, at that time the Comte de Torigny was absent from home; but as he remembered with pleasure the family of D'Harmental, he recommended his nephew to the Chevalier de Villarceaux, who could refuse nothing to his friend the Comte de Torigny, and took the young man to Madame de Maintenon.

Madame de Maintenon had one good quality, — she always continued to be the friend of her old lovers. She received the Chevalier d'Harmental graciously, thanks to the old recollections which recommended him to her, and some days afterward, the Maréchal de Villars coming to pay his court to her, she spoke a few such pressing words in favor of her young protégé, that the marshal, delighted to find an opportunity of obliging this queen *in partibus*, replied that from that hour he attached the chevalier to his military establishment, and would take care to offer him every occasion to justify his august protectress's good opinion of him.

It was a great joy to the chevalier to see such a door opened to him. The coming campaign would be definitive. Louis XIV. had arrived at the last period of his reign, — the period of reverses. Tallard and Marsin had been beaten at Hochstett, Villeroi at Ramilies, and Villars himself, the hero of Friedlingen, had lost the famous battle of Malplaquet against Marlborough and Eugène. Europe, kept down for a time by Colbert and Louvois, rose against France; and the situation of affairs was desperate.

The king, like a despairing invalid who changes his doctor every hour, changed ministers every day. Every new expedient only revealed a new weakness. France could not sustain war, and could not obtain peace.

Vainly she offered to abandon Spain, and limit her frontier. This was not sufficient humiliation. It was demanded of the king that he should allow the hostile armies to cross France, in order to chase his grandson from the throne of Spain; and also that he should give up, as pledges, Cambray, Metz, La Rochelle, and Bayonne, unless he preferred dethroning that grandson himself, by open force, within a year.

Such were the conditions on which a truce was granted to the conqueror of Les Dunes, Senef, Fleurus, Steenkirk, and of La Marsaille; to him who had hitherto held in the folds of his royal mantle peace and war; to him who called himself the distributer of crowns, the chastiser of nations, the great, the immortal; to him in whose honor, during the last half-century, marbles have been sculptured, bronzes cast, sonnets written, and libations of flattery poured out.

Louis XIV. had wept in full council. These tears had produced an army, which was intrusted to Villars.

Villars marched straight to the enemy, whose camp was at Denain, and who reposed in security while watching the agony of France. Never had greater responsibility rested on one head. Villars was about to stake the salvation of France on a single venture.

The allies had established a line of fortifications between Denain and Marchiennes, which, with proud anticipation, Albemarle and Eugène called the high-road to Paris. Villars resolved to take Denain by surprise, and Albemarle conquered, to give battle to Eugène. In order to succeed in this audacious enterprise, it was necessary to deceive, not only the enemy's army, but also his own, — its success depending, so to speak, on its impossibility.

Villars announced openly his intention of forcing the

lines of Landrecies. One night, at an appointed hour, the whole army moves off in the direction of that town. Suddenly the order is given to bear to the left. The engineers throw three bridges over the Scheldt. Villars passes over the river without obstacle, throws himself into the marshes, considered impassable, through which the soldier advances with the water up to his waist, marches straight to the first redoubts and takes them almost without striking a blow, seizes successively fortifications covering a league, reaches Denain, crosses the moat which surrounds it, penetrates into the town, and on arriving at the central square finds his young protégé, the Chevalier d'Harmental, who presents to him the sword of Albemarle, whom he has just taken prisoner.

At this moment the approach of Eugène is announced. Villars returns, reaches before his arrival the bridge over which he must pass, takes possession of it, and awaits him. There the real battle takes place, for the taking of Denain had been but a short skirmish. Eugène makes attack after attack, returning seven times to the head of the bridge, where the artillery and bayonets by which it is defended repel his best troops with serious losses. At length, his clothes riddled with balls, bleeding from two wounds, he mounts his third horse, and the conqueror of Hochstett and Malplaquet retreats, weeping with rage, and biting his gloves with fury. In six hours the whole aspect of affairs has changed, — France is saved, and Louis XIV. is still the great king.

D'Harmental had conducted himself like a man who wished to gain his spurs at once. Villars, seeing him covered with blood and dust, recalled to mind by whom the young man had been recommended to him, and made him draw near, while in the midst of the field of battle he wrote on a drum the result of the day's fighting.

"Are you wounded?" he asked.

"Yes, Monsieur le Maréchal, but so slightly that it is not worth speaking of."

"Have you the strength to ride sixty leagues, without resting an hour, a minute, a second?"

"I have the strength for anything that will serve the king or you."

"Then set out instantly, go to Madame de Maintenon, tell her from me what you have seen, and announce to her the courier who will bring the official account. If she wishes to conduct you to the king, go with her."

D'Harmental understood the importance of the mission with which he was charged; and bleeding and dusty as he was, he mounted a fresh horse and gained the first stage. Twelve hours later he was at Versailles.

Villars had foreseen what would happen. At the first words which fell from the mouth of the chevalier, Madame de Maintenon took him by the hand and conducted him to the king. The king was at work, with Voisin, in his bedchamber, — contrary to his custom, for he was somewhat indisposed.

Madame de Maintenon opened the door, pushed D'Harmental to the feet of the king, and raising her hands to heaven, "Sire," said she, "give thanks to God! for your Majesty knows we are nothing by ourselves, and every blessing comes from Him."

"What has happened, Monsieur? Speak!" said the king, quickly, astonished to see this young man, whom he did not know, at his feet.

"Sire," replied the chevalier, "the camp at Denain is taken. Albemarle is a prisoner. Prince Eugène has taken flight; and the Maréchal de Villars places his victory at your Majesty's feet."

Louis XIV. turned pale, in spite of his command over

himself. His strength failed him, and he leaned against the table for support.

"What is the matter, Sire?" said Madame de Maintenon, hastening to him.

"Madame, I owe you everything," said Louis XIV.; "you save the king, and your friends save the kingdom."

Madame de Maintenon bowed and kissed the king's hand respectfully.

Then Louis XIV., still pale and much moved, passed behind the great curtain which hid the alcove containing his bed, and they heard a prayer of thanksgiving. He then reappeared, grave and calm, as if nothing had happened. "And now, Monsieur," said he, "tell me the details."

D'Harmental gave an account of that marvellous battle, which came as by a miracle to save the monarchy.

"And have you nothing to tell of yourself?" asked Louis XIV. "If I may judge by the blood and dust with which you are yet covered, you did not remain idle."

"Sire, I did my best," said D'Harmental, bowing; "but if there is really anything to tell, I will, with your permission, leave that narration to the Maréchal de Villars."

"It is well, young man; and if he forgets you by chance, we shall remember. You must be fatigued; go and rest. I am pleased with you."

D'Harmental retired joyously, Madame de Maintenon conducting him to the door; he kissed her hand again, and hastened to profit by the royal permission. For twenty-four hours he had neither eaten, drunk, nor slept. On his awaking, they gave him a packet which had been brought from the minister of war. It was his commission as colonel.

Two months afterward peace was made. Spain gave up

half its territory, but France remained intact. Louis XIV. died. Two distinct and irreconcilable parties were in existence, — that of the bastards, centring in the Duc du Maine, and that of the legitimate princes, represented by the Duc d'Orléans.

If the Duc du Maine had had the will, the perseverance, the courage, of his wife, Louise Bénédicte de Condé, perhaps, supported as he was by the king's testamentary directions, he might have triumphed. But he had to defend himself in broad day, as he was attacked; and the Duc du Maine, weak in mind and heart, dangerous by force of cowardice, was good for nothing except for transactions carried on in secret. He was threatened openly, so that his numberless artifices, his cunning pretences, his dark and deep expedients, were useless to him. In one day, and almost without a struggle, he was precipitated from that height to which he had been raised by the blind love of the old king. It was an ignominious fall; he retired in disorder, abandoning the regency to his rival, and preserving, out of all the favors heaped upon him, only the superintendence of the royal education, the command of the artillery, and precedence over the dukes and peers.

The decree rendered by the parliament struck the old court and all attached to it. Père Letellier did not wait to be exiled; Madame de Maintenon took refuge at St. Cyr; and Monsieur le Duc du Maine shut himself up in the beautiful town of Sceaux, to continue his translation of Lucretius.

The Chevalier d'Harmental had followed, as an interested observer, these different intrigues, waiting till they should assume a character which would permit him to take part in them. If there had been an open and armed contest, he would have taken that side to which gratitude called him. Too young, and as yet too chaste, —

if that word may be used in treating of politics, — to turn with the wind of fortune, he remained faithful to the memory of the late king, and to the ruins of the old court.

His absence from the Palais Royal, round which hovered all those who wished to take a place in the political firmament, was interpreted as opposition; and as he had received one morning the commission which gave him a regiment, so on another morning he received the decree which took it from him.

D'Harmental had the ambition of his age. The only career then open to a gentleman was that of arms. His début had been brilliant; and the blow which took from him, at the age of twenty-five years, all his hopes for the future was profoundly painful. He hastened to Monsieur de Villars, in whom he had found so warm a protector. The marshal received him with the coldness of a man who wishes not only to forget the past, but also to see it forgotten. D'Harmental understood that the old courtier was about to change his skin, and retired discreetly.

Although selfishness was the ruling principle of that period, the chevalier's first encounter with it was bitter to him; but he was at that happy time of life when a disappointed ambition rarely occasions a deep or lasting grief.

Ambition is the passion of those who have no other, and the chevalier had every one proper to five-and-twenty years of age. Besides, the spirit of the times did not tend to melancholy; that is a modern sentiment, springing from the overthrow of fortunes and the weakness of man. In the eighteenth century men rarely dreamed of abstract things, or aspired toward the unknown; they went straight to pleasure, glory, or fortune, and all who were handsome, brave, or intriguing could attain them

Up to that time one could be happy without being ashamed of it; now mind rules matter with so high a hand that men dare not avow that they are happy.

Besides, it must be admitted that joy was "in the air." France seemed to be sailing, with all sails spread, in search of one of those enchanted islands found on the shining map of the "Arabian Nights." After the long and sombre winter of Louis XIV.'s old age appeared all at once the joyous and brilliant spring of a young royalty. Every one basked in this new sun, radiant and benevolent, and went about buzzing and careless, like the bees and butterflies on the first fine day of summer.

Pleasure, absent and proscribed for more than thirty years, had returned, and was welcomed as a friend supposed to have gone forever. From all directions she was greeted with open arms and open hearts; and in the fear, no doubt, that she might again disappear, there was a general disposition to make the most of every moment of her stay.

The Chevalier d'Harmental had retained his sadness for a week. Then he had mingled again with the crowd; then the whirlpool had seized him, and had thrown him at the feet of a pretty woman. For three months he had been the happiest man in the world. He had forgotten St. Cyr, the Tuileries, and the Palais Royal. He did not know whether there was a Madame de Maintenon, a king, or a regent. He knew only that it is sweet to live when one is loved, and he did not see why he should not live and love forever. He was still in this dream, when, as we have said, supping with his friend the Baron de Valef at La Fillon's, in the Rue St. Honoré, he had been brutally awakened by Lafare. Lovers are often unpleasantly awakened; and we have seen that D'Harmental was not more patient under that experience than others.

Impatience was especially pardonable in the chevalier, because he thought he loved truly, and because, in his juvenile good faith, he thought that nothing could replace love in his heart.

Thus Madame d'Averne's strange but candid letter, instead of inspiring him with the admiration which it merited, had at first overwhelmed him. It is the property of every sorrow which overtakes us to reawaken griefs which we believed dead, but which were only sleeping. The soul has its scars as well as the body, and they are seldom so well healed but that a new wound can reopen them.

D'Harmental again began to feel ambitious. The loss of his mistress had recalled to him the loss of his regiment. And therefore it required nothing more than the second letter, so unexpected and mysterious, to divert him from his grief. A lover of our days would have thrown it from him with disdain, and would have despised himself if he had not nursed his grief so as to make himself poetically melancholy for a week at least; but a lover during the regency was much more accommodating. Suicide was not yet invented, and if by chance any one fell into the water he did not drown so long as there was the least little straw to cling to.

D'Harmental did not affect the folly of sadness. He decided, sighing, it is true, that he would go to the opera ball; and for a lover betrayed in so unforeseen and cruel a manner this was something. But it must be confessed, to the shame of our poor species, that he was led to this philosophic determination chiefly by the fact that the letter was written in a female hand.

CHAPTER IV.

A BAL-MASQUÉ OF THE PERIOD. — THE BAT.

THE opera balls were then at their height. They were an invention of the Chevalier de Bouillon, who obtained pardon for assuming, on unintelligible grounds, the title of Prince d'Auvergne, only by rendering this service to the dissipated society of the time. It was he who had invented the double flooring which put the pit on a level with the stage; and the regent, who highly appreciated all good inventions, had granted him in recompense a pension of six thousand francs, which was four times what the "great king" had given to Corneille. That beautiful hall, with its rich and grave architecture, which the Cardinal de Richelieu had inaugurated with his "Mirame," where Lulli and Quinault had presented their dramas of country life, and where Molière had himself played his principal works, was this evening the rendezvous of all that was noble, rich, and elegant in the court.

D'Harmental, from a feeling of spite, very natural in his situation, had taken particular pains with his toilet. When he arrived, the room was already full, and he had some apprehension that the mask with the violet ribbon would not find him, inasmuch as the unknown had neglected to assign a place of meeting; and he congratulated himself on having come unmasked. This resolution showed great confidence in the discretion of his adver-
's in the recent engagement, a word from whom would
sent him before the parliament, or at least to the

Bastille. But so much confidence had the gentlemen of that day in one another's good faith that after having in the morning passed his sword through the body of one of the regent's favorites, the chevalier came, without hesitation, to seek an adventure at the Palais Royal. The first person he saw there was the young Duc de Richelieu, whose name, adventures, elegance, and perhaps his indiscretions, had already brought him so much into fashion. It was said that two princesses of the blood disputed his affections, which did not prevent Madame de Nesle and Madame de Polignac from fighting with pistols for him, or Madame de Sabran, Madame de Villars, Madame de Mouchy, and Madame de Tencin from sharing his heart.

He had just joined the Marquis de Canillac, one of the regent's favorites, whom, on account of the grave appearance he affected, his Highness called his mentor. Richelieu began to tell Canillac a story, in a loud voice, and with bursts of laughter. The chevalier was acquainted with the duke, but not intimately enough to interrupt him in the midst of a conversation; he was about to pass, when the duke seized him by the coat.

"*Pardieu!*" he said, "my dear Chevalier, you are welcome. I am telling Canillac an adventure which may be useful to him as nocturnal lieutenant to the regent, and to you as exposed to the same danger as mine. The story dates from to-day, — a further merit, as I have had only time to tell it to about twenty people, so that it is scarcely known. Spread it; you will oblige me, and the regent also."

D'Harmental frowned. The duke had chosen his time badly. At this moment the Chevalier de Ravanne passed, pursuing a mask. "Ravanne!" cried Richelieu, "Ravanne!"

"I am not at leisure," replied the chevalier.

"Do you know where Lafare is?"

"He has a headache."

"And Fargy?"

"He has a sprain." And Ravanne disappeared in the crowd, after bowing in the most friendly manner to his adversary of the morning.

"Well, and the story?" asked Canillac.

"We are coming to it. Imagine that six or seven months ago, when I left the Bastille, where my duel with Gacé had sent me, three or four days after my reappearance Rafé gave me a charming little note from Madame de Parabère, inviting me to pass that evening with her. You understand, Chevalier, that it is not at the moment of leaving the Bastille that one would despise a rendezvous given by the mistress of him who holds the keys. No need to inquire if I was punctual. At the time appointed I was there. Guess whom I found seated on the sofa by her side. I give you a hundred guesses."

"Her husband?" said Canillac.

"By no means; his Royal Highness himself. I was the more astonished, as I had been admitted with some mystery, as if the lady were alone; nevertheless, as you will understand, I would not allow myself to appear astonished. I assumed a composed and modest air, like yours, Canillac, and saluted the marchioness with such profound respect that the regent burst out laughing. I did not expect this explosion, and was, I confess, a little disconcerted. I was about to sit down in a chair, but the regent signed to me to sit on the sofa, on the other side of the marchioness. I obeyed. 'My dear Duke,' he said, 'we have written to you on a serious affair. Here is this poor marchioness, who, after being separated from her husband for two years, finds herself in an interesting

situation.' The marchioness tried to blush, but finding she could not, covered her face with her fan. 'At the first word she told me of her position,' continued the regent, 'I sent for D'Argenson, and asked him who could be the father.' 'Oh, Monsieur, spare me!' said the marchioness. 'Nonsense, my little duck; a little patience! Do you know what the lieutenant of police answered me, my dear Duke?' 'No,' said I, much embarrassed. 'He said it was either you or I.' 'It is an atrocious calumny!' I cried. 'Don't be excited, Duke; the marchioness has confessed all.' 'Then,' I replied, 'if the marchioness has confessed all, I don't see what remains for me to tell.' 'Oh,' continued the regent, 'I don't ask you for details. It only remains for us, as accomplices, to get each other out of the scrape.' 'And what have you to fear, Monseigneur?' I asked. 'As for myself, I know that protected by your Highness's name, I can brave all.' 'What have we to fear, my dear fellow?' 'The outcry of Parabère, who wants me to make him a duke.' 'Well, suppose we make him the father,' I replied. 'Exactly,' said his Highness, laughing; 'and you have had the same idea as the marchioness.' '*Pardieu!* Madame,' I said, 'that is an honor for me.' 'But the difficulty,' objected Madame de Parabère, 'is that it is more than two years since I have even spoken to the marquis; and as he piques himself on his jealousy and severity, I don't know what may happen. He has made a vow that if ever I should get into the condition in which I now am, the law should avenge him.' 'You see, Richelieu, this becomes rather uncomfortable,' added the regent. '*Peste!* I think so, Monseigneur!' 'I have some means of coercion in my hands, but they do not go so far as to force a husband to be reconciled to his wife, and to receive her at his house.' 'Well,' I replied, 'suppose we bring him here.' 'There

is the difficulty.' 'Wait a moment; Madame la Marquise, may I ask, without indiscretion, if Monsieur de Parabère still has a weakness for champagne and burgundy?' 'I fear so,' said the marchioness. 'Then, Monseigneur, we are saved! I invite the marquis to supper, with a dozen of good fellows and charming women. You send Dubois—' 'What! Dubois?' asked the regent. 'Certainly; one of us must remain sober. As Dubois cannot drink, he must undertake to make the marquis drink; and when everybody is under the table, he can take him away from us and do what he likes with him. The rest depends on the marchioness.' 'Did I not tell you, Marchioness,' said the regent, clapping his hands, 'that Richelieu would give us good advice? See here, Duke,' he continued, 'you must leave off wandering round certain palaces; leave the old lady to die quietly at St. Cyr, the lame man to rhyme at Sceaux, and join yourself with us. I will give you, in my cabinet, the place of that old fool D'Uxelles; and affairs will go no worse for the change.' 'Oh, yes,' I replied, 'I dare say; but the thing is impossible,—I have other views.' 'Obstinate fellow!' murmured the regent."

"And Monsieur de Parabère?" asked the Chevalier d'Harmental, curious to know the end of the story.

"Oh, everything took place as we had planned. He went to sleep at my house, and awoke at his wife's. He made a great noise, but there was no longer any possibility of crying scandal and initiating a legal process. His carriage had stopped at night at his wife's hotel, and all the servants saw him enter, and saw him leave in the morning; so that we have tranquilly waited for the end, al-
ugh with some impatience to know whom the child
d resemble,—Monsieur de Parabère, the regent, or my-
Well, the marchioness was delivered to-day at noon."

"And whom does the child resemble?" asked Canillac.

"Nocé!" replied Richelieu, with a burst of laughter. "Is n't it a good story, Marquis? What a pity that the poor Marquis de Parabère should be so foolish as to die before the *dénouement!* How he would have been avenged for the trick we played him!"

"Chevalier," at this moment a sweet and flute-like voice whispered in D'Harmental's ear, while a little hand rested on his arm, "when you have finished your conversation with Monsieur de Richelieu, I claim my turn."

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Duc," said the chevalier, "but you see that I am called away."

"I will let you go on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you will tell my story to this charming bat, charging her to tell it to all the night-birds of her acquaintance."

"I fear," said D'Harmental, "I shall not have time."

"Oh! so much the better for you," replied the duke, freeing the chevalier, whom till then he had held by the coat, "for then you must have something better to say." And he turned on his heel, to take the arm of a domino, who, in passing, stopped to compliment him on his adventure.

D'Harmental threw a rapid glance on the mask who had accosted him, in order to make sure that it was the one with whom he had an appointment, and was satisfied on seeing a violet ribbon on the left shoulder. He hastened, therefore, to remove himself to some distance from Canillac and Richelieu, in order not to be interrupted in a conversation which he expected to be highly interesting.

The unknown, whose voice betrayed her sex, was of middle height, and young, so far as one could judge from

the elasticity of her movements. As to her stature and form, as to all that which the eye of the observer is so curious to discover in such cases, it was useless to speculate, — the study promised so small result. In short, as the word dropped by Monsieur de Richelieu has already indicated, she had adopted the costume best calculated to hide either graces or defects; she was dressed as a bat, — a costume much in vogue at that period, and very convenient by reason of its remarkable simplicity, since it consisted only of two black skirts. The manner of employing them was at the command of everybody. One was fastened, as usual, round the waist; the masked head was passed through the placket-hole of the other. The front was pulled down to make wings; the back raised to make horns. Any one could be almost certain thus to puzzle an interlocutor, who could recognize him only upon the closest scrutiny.

The chevalier made all these observations in less time than it has taken to describe them; but having no knowledge of the person with whom he had to deal, and believing it to be some love intrigue, he hesitated to speak, when, turning toward him, "Chevalier," said the mask, without disguising her voice, assuming that it was unknown to him, "do you know that I am doubly grateful to you for having come, particularly in the state of mind in which you are? It is unfortunate that I cannot attribute this exactitude to anything but curiosity."

"Beautiful mask," answered D'Harmental, "did you not tell me in your letter that you were a good genius? Now, if really you partake of a superior nature, the past, the present, and the future must be known to you. You knew, then, that I should come; and since you knew it, my coming ought not to astonish you."

"Alas!" replied the unknown, "it is easy to see that

you are a weak mortal, and that you are happy enough never to have raised yourself above your sphere. Otherwise you would know that if we, as you say, know the past, the present, and the future, this science is silent at to what regards ourselves; and the things buried in the deepest obscurity are those which we most desire to know."

"*Diable!* Monsieur le Génie," answered D'Harmental, "do you know that you will make me very vain if you continue in that tone? For, take care! you have told me, or nearly so, that you had a great desire that I should come to your rendezvous."

"I did not think I was telling you anything new, Chevalier. It appeared to me that my letter would leave you no doubt as to the desire I felt of seeing you."

"This desire, which I admit only because you declare it, and I am too gallant to contradict you, — has it not made you promise in your letter more than is in your power to perform?"

"Make a trial of my science; that will give you a test of my power."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* I will confine myself to the simplest thing. You say you are acquainted with the past, the present, and the future. Tell me my fortune."

"Nothing easier. Give me your hand!"

D'Harmental did what was asked of him.

"Sire Chevalier," said the stranger, after a moment's examination, "I see very legibly written by the direction of the adductor muscle, and by the arrangement of the longitudinal lines of the palm, five words, in which are included the history of your life. These words are, *courage*, *ambition*, *disappointment*, *love*, and *treachery*."

"*Peste!*" interrupted the chevalier, "I did not know that the genii studied anatomy so deeply, and were obliged to take their degrees like a Bachelor of Salamanca."

"Genii know all that men know, and many other things besides, Chevalier."

"Well, then, what mean these words, at once so sonorous and so opposite; and what do they teach you of me in the past, my very learned genius?"

"They teach me that it is by your *courage* alone that you gained the rank of colonel, which you held in the army of Flanders; that this rank awakened your *ambition;* that this *ambition* has been followed by a *disappointment;* that you hoped to console yourself for this *disappointment* by *love;* but that *love,* like fortune, is subject to *treachery,* and that you have been betrayed."

"Not bad," said the chevalier; "and the Sibyl of Cumæ could not have got out of it better. A little vague, as in all horoscopes, but a great fund of truth, nevertheless. Let us come to the present, beautiful mask."

"The present, Chevalier? Let us speak softly of it, for it smells terribly of the Bastille."

The chevalier started in spite of himself, for he believed that no one except the actors who had played a part in it could know his adventure of the morning.

"There are at this hour," continued the stranger, "two brave gentlemen lying sadly in their beds, while we chat gayly at the ball; and that because a certain Chevalier d'Harmental, a great listener at doors, did not remember a hemistich of Virgil."

"And what is this hemistich?" asked the chevalier, more and more astonished.

"'Facilis descensus Averni,'" said the Bat, laughing.

"My dear genius," cried the chevalier, trying to peep through the openings in the stranger's mask, "that, allow me to inform you, is a quotation rather masculine."

"Do you not know that genii are of both sexes?"

"Yes; but I had never heard that they quoted the Æneid so fluently."

"Is not the quotation appropriate? You speak to me of the Sibyl of Cumæ; I answer you in her language. You ask for something positive; I give it to you. But you mortals are never satisfied."

"No; for I confess that this knowledge of the past and the present inspires me with an oppressive desire to know the future."

"There are always two futures," said the mask; "there is the future of weak minds, and the future of strong minds. God has given man free will that he may choose. Your future depends on yourself."

"But we must know these two futures, that we may choose the best."

"Well, there is one which awaits you somewhere in the environs of Nevers, in the depth of the country, among the rabbits of your warren and the fowls of your poultry-yard. This one will conduct you straight to the magistrate's bench of your parish. It is an easy ambition, and you have only to let yourself go to attain it. You are on the road."

"And the other?" replied the chevalier, visibly piqued at the supposition that in any case such a future could be his.

"The other," said the stranger, leaning her arm on that of the young man, and fixing her eyes on him through her mask, — "the other will throw you back into noise and light, will make you one of the actors in the game which is playing in the world, and whether you gain or lose, will leave you at least the renown of a great player."

"If I lose, what shall I lose?" asked the chevalier.

"Life, probably."

The chevalier tossed his head contemptuously.

"And if I win?" added he.

"What do you say to the rank of colonel of horse, the title of Grandee of Spain, and the order of the Saint Esprit, without counting the field-marshal's bâton in the future?"

"I say that the prize is worth the stake, and that if you can prove to me that you can keep your promise, I am your man."

"This proof," replied the mask, "must be given you by another; and if you wish to have it, you must follow me."

"Oh," said D'Harmental, "am I deceived, and are you but a genius of the second order, — a subaltern spirit, an intermediate power? *Diable!* this would take away a little of my consideration for you."

"What does it matter if I am subject to some great enchantress, and she has sent me to you?"

"I warn you that I do not treat with ambassadors."

"And therefore my mission is to conduct you to her."

"Then I shall see her?"

"Face to face, as Moses saw the Lord."

"Let us go, then."

"Chevalier, you go quickly to the work; you forget that before all initiations there are certain indispensable ceremonies to secure the discretion of the initiated."

"What must I do?"

"You must allow your eyes to be bandaged, and let me lead you where I like. When arrived at the door of the temple, you must take a solemn oath to reveal nothing concerning the things you may hear, or the persons you may see."

"I am ready to swear by the Styx," said D'Harmental, laughing.

"No, Chevalier," said the mask, in a grave voice; "swear only by your honor. You are known, and that will suffice."

"And when I have taken this oath," asked the chevalier, after an instant's reflection, "will it be permitted to me to retire, if the proposals made are not such as a gentleman may entertain?"

"Your conscience will be your sole arbiter, and your word the only pledge demanded of you."

"I am ready," said the chevalier.

"Let us go, then," said the mask.

The chevalier prepared to cross the room in a straight line toward the door; but perceiving three of his friends, who might have stopped him on the way, he made a turn and described a curve, which, however, would bring him to the same end.

"What are you doing?" asked the mask.

"I am avoiding some one who might detain us."

"Ah!" said the mask, "I began to fear."

"Fear what?" asked D'Harmental.

"To fear that your ardor was diminished in the proportion of the diagonal to the two sides of a square."

"*Pardieu!*" said D'Harmental, "this is the first time, I believe, that ever a rendezvous was given to a gentleman at an opera ball to talk anatomy, ancient literature, and mathematics. I am sorry to say so, but you are the most pedantic genius I ever met in my life."

The Bat burst out laughing, but made no reply to this sally, in which was betrayed the spite of the chevalier at not being able to recognize a person who appeared to be so well acquainted with his adventures; but as this only added to his curiosity, both descended in equal haste, and found themselves in the vestibule.

"What road shall we take?" asked the chevalier.

"Shall we travel underground, or in a car drawn by griffins?"

"With your permission, Chevalier, we will simply go in a carriage. In fact, and though more than once you have seemed to doubt it, I am a woman, and I am rather afraid of the dark."

"Permit me, then, to call my carriage," said the chevalier.

"Not at all; I have my own."

"Call it, then."

"With your permission, Chevalier, we will not be more proud than Mahomet with the mountain; and as my carriage cannot come to us, we will go to it."

At these words the Bat drew the chevalier into the Rue St. Honoré. A carriage without armorial bearings, with two dark-colored horses, waited at the corner of the street. The coachman was on his seat, enveloped in a great cape which hid the lower part of his face, while a three-cornered hat covered his forehead and eyes. A footman held the door open with one hand, and with the other held his handkerchief so as to conceal his face.

"Get in," said the mask.

D'Harmental hesitated a moment. Those two servants without livery, who seemed as anxious as their mistress to preserve their incognito; the carriage without blazon; the obscure place where it was drawn up; and the advanced hour of the night, — all inspired the chevalier with a very natural sentiment of mistrust; but reflecting that he gave his arm to a woman, and had a sword by his side, he got in boldly. The Bat sat down by him, and the footman closed the door.

"Well, are we not going to start?" said the chevalier, seeing that the carriage remained motionless.

"There remains a little precaution to be taken,"

said the mask, drawing a silk handkerchief from her pocket.

"Ah, yes, true," said D'Harmental; "I had forgotten. I give myself up to you with confidence." And he advanced his head.

The unknown bandaged his eyes, then said, "Chevalier, you give me your word of honor not to move this bandage till permission is given you to take it off altogether?"

"I do."

"It is well."

Then, raising the glass in front, she said to the coachman, "You know where, Monsieur le Comte." And the horses started off at a gallop.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARSENAL.

As the conversation had been animated at the ball, so the silence was absolute during the ride. This adventure, which at first had presented itself under the appearance of an amorous intrigue, had immediately assumed a graver aspect, and appeared to turn toward political machinations. If this new aspect did not frighten the chevalier, at least it gave him matter for reflection; and his reflections were the more profound because more than once he had dreamed of what he would do under circumstances like those he was about to encounter.

There is a moment in the life of every man which decides upon his future. This moment, important as it is, is rarely prepared by calculation or directed by will. It is almost always chance which takes a man as the wind does a leaf, and throws him into some new and unknown path, where, once entered, he is obliged to obey a superior force, and where, while believing himself free, he is but the slave of circumstances and the plaything of events.

It was thus with the chevalier. We have seen by what gate he entered Versailles, and how interest and gratitude attached him to the party of the old court. He had not calculated the good or the harm that Madame de Maintenon had done to France; he had not considered the right or the power of Louis XIV. to legitimatize his bastard sons; he had not weighed in the balance of

genealogy Monsieur du Maine and Monsieur d'Orléans; he had felt only that he must devote his life to those who had raised him from obscurity. And when the old king was dead; when he learned that one of his last wishes was that Monsieur le Duc du Maine should be regent; when he had seen those last wishes overruled by the parliament, — he had regarded as a usurpation Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans's accession to the regency.

Fully expecting an armed reaction against this power, he had looked around through all France to see the standard unfolded which his conscience told him he ought to follow. But to his great astonishment nothing that he expected happened. Spain, so much interested to have a willing friend at the head of the French government, had not even protested; Monsieur du Maine, fatigued by his brief contest, had retired into the shade; Monsieur de Toulouse, good, easy, and almost ashamed of the favors which had fallen to the share of himself and his brother, would not permit even the supposition that he could put himself at the head of a party. The Maréchal de Villeroy had made a feeble and unorganized opposition. Villars went to no one, but waited for some one to come to him. D'Uxelles had changed sides, and had accepted the post of secretary for foreign affairs. The dukes and peers continued patient, and paid court to the regent, in the hope that he would at last take away from the Dukes of Maine and Toulouse, as he had promised, the precedence which Louis XIV. had given them.

Finally there was discontent with, and even opposition to, the government of the Duc d'Orléans, but all impalpable and disjointed. This is what D'Harmental had seen, and what had resheathed his half-drawn sword: he thought he was the only one who had anticipated another issue to affairs, and he gradually came to the conclusion

that that issue had no existence except in his own imagination, since those who should have been most interested in that result seemed to regard it as so impossible that they did not even attempt to attain to it.

But when he found himself deceived; when upon that smiling surface he saw grave events in preparation; when he saw that that apparent carelessness was only a veil concealing the operation of ambition, — then his hopes, which he had thought dead, but which were only sleeping, murmured, on their awaking, promises more seductive than ever before. Those offers made to him, even though perhaps exaggerated, that future promised him, improbable as it might be, had excited his imagination. Now, to one twenty-six years of age, imagination is a strange enchantress; it is the architect of castles in the air; it is the fairy of golden dreams; it is the queen of the kingdom without bounds; and while it rests gigantic expectations on the frailest support, it trusts to them as if they were based on the earth's solidity.

Although the carriage had been on the road nearly half an hour, the chevalier had not found the journey long; so deep were his reflections that even if his eyes had not been bandaged, he would have been equally ignorant of what streets they passed through. At length he heard the wheels rumbling as if they were passing under an arch. He heard the grating of hinges as the gate opened to admit him and closed behind him, and directly after, the carriage, having described a semi-circle, stopped.

"Chevalier," said his guide, "if you have any fear, there is still time to draw back; if, on the contrary, you have not changed your resolution, come with me."

D'Harmental's only answer was to extend his hand. The footman opened the door; the unknown got out first, and then assisted the chevalier. His feet soon

encountered some steps; he mounted six, — still conducted by the masked lady, — crossed a vestibule, passed through a corridor, and entered a room.

"We have now arrived," said the unknown. "You remember our conditions: you are free to accept or refuse a part in the piece about to be played; but in case of a refusal, you promise not to divulge anything you may see or hear."

"I swear it on my honor," replied the chevalier.

"Now, sit down; wait in this room, and do not remove the bandage till you hear two o'clock strike. You have not long to wait."

With these words his conductress left him. Two o'clock soon struck, and the chevalier tore off the bandage. He was alone in the most marvellous boudoir possible to imagine. It was small and octagonal, hung with lilac and silver, with furniture and portières of tapestry. His eyes rested on buhl tables covered with splendid china, a Persian carpet, and a ceiling painted by Watteau, who was then coming into fashion. At this sight the chevalier found it difficult to believe that he had been summoned on grave matters, and almost returned to his first ideas.

At this moment a door hidden by the tapestry was opened, and there appeared a woman whom, in the fantastic preoccupation of his spirit, D'Harmental might have taken for a fairy, so slight, small, and delicate was her figure. She was dressed in pearl-gray satin covered with bouquets, so beautifully embroidered that at a short distance they appeared like natural flowers; the flounces, ruffles, and head-dress were of English point, adorned with pearls and diamonds. Her face was covered with a half-mask of black velvet, from which hung a fringe of black lace.

D'Harmental bowed, for there was something royal in

the motions and the appearance of this woman, which showed him that the other had been only an envoy. "Madame," said he, "have I really, as I begin to believe, left the earth for the land of spirits, and are you the powerful fairy to whom this beautiful palace belongs?"

"Alas, Chevalier!" replied the masked lady, in gentle and yet positive tones, "I am not a powerful fairy, but on the contrary a poor princess, persecuted by a wicked enchanter, who has taken from me my crown, and cruelly oppresses my kingdom. Therefore I am searching everywhere for a brave knight to deliver me; and your renown has led me to address myself to you."

"If my life only is needed to restore you your past power, Madame," replied D'Harmental, "speak; I am ready to risk it with joy. Who is this enchanter that I must combat, — this giant that I must destroy? Since you have chosen me above all, I will prove myself worthy of the honor. From this moment I engage my word, even if it costs me my life."

"If you lose your life, Chevalier, it will be in good company," said the lady, untying her mask, and discovering her face; "for you will lose it with the son of Louis XIV. and the granddaughter of the great Condé."

"Madame la Duchesse du Maine!" cried D'Harmental, falling on one knee. "Will your Highness pardon me if, not knowing you, I have said anything which may fall short of the profound respect I feel for you?"

"You have said nothing for which I am not proud and grateful, Chevalier; but perhaps you now repent. If so, you are at liberty to withdraw."

"Heaven forbid, Madame, that having had the good fortune to engage my life in the service of so great and noble a princess, I should deprive myself of the greatest honor I ever dared to hope for! No, Madame; accept

seriously, I pray you, what just now I offered with a smile, — my arm, my sword, and my life."

"I see," said the Duchesse du Maine, with that smile which gave her such power over all who approached her, "that the Baron de Valef did not deceive me, and that you are all that he said in describing you. Come, I will present you to our friends."

The duchess went first, and D'Harmental followed, astonished at what had taken place, but fully resolved, partly from pride, partly from conviction, to take no step backward.

The duchess conducted him to a salon where four personages awaited him. These were the Cardinal de Polignac, the Marquis de Pompadour, Monsieur de Malezieux, and the Abbé Brigaud.

The Cardinal de Polignac was supposed to be the lover of Madame du Maine. He was a handsome prelate, from forty to forty-five years of age, — always dressed with the greatest care; possessed of an unctuous voice, a cold face, and a timid heart; devoured by ambition, which was constantly thwarted by hesitancy in action; of high birth, as his name indicated; very learned for a cardinal, and very well-informed for a nobleman.

Monsieur de Pompadour was a man of from forty-five to fifty years old, who had been a minion of the dauphin, the son of Louis XIV., and who had so deep love and so tender veneration for all the family of the "great king" that seeing with grief that the regent was about to declare war against Philip V., he had thrown himself, body and soul, into the Duc du Maine's party. Proud and disinterested, he had given a rare example of loyalty in sending back to the regent the brevet of his pensions and those of his wife, and in refusing for himself and the Marquis de Courcillon, his son-in-law, every place offered to them.

Monsieur de Malezieux was a man from sixty to sixty-five years old, Chancellor of Dombes and Lord of Chatenay. He owed this double title to the gratitude of Monsieur le Duc du Maine, whose education he had conducted. A poet, a musician, an author of small comedies, which he played himself with infinite spirit; born for an idle and intellectual life; always occupied in procuring pleasure for others, and, above all, for Madame du Maine, whom he adored, — he was a type of the Sybarite of the eighteenth century; but like the Sybarites who, drawn by the aspect of beauty, followed Cleopatra to Actium and were killed around her, he would have followed his dear Bénédicte through fire and water, and at a word from her would without hesitation, and almost without regret, have thrown himself from the towers of Notre Dame.

The Abbé Brigaud was the son of a Lyons merchant. His father, who was commercially related with the court of Spain, was charged to make overtures, as if on his own account, for the marriage of the young Louis XIV. with the Infanta Maria Theresa of Austria. If these overtures had been badly received, the ministers of France would have disavowed them; but they were well received, and they supported them.

The marriage took place; and as the little Brigaud was born about the same time as the dauphin, his father asked, in recompense for his services, that the king's son should stand godfather to his child, and that favor was graciously accorded to him. Moreover, the young Brigaud was placed near the dauphin, and thus he became acquainted with the Marquis de Pompadour, who, as we have said, was one of the pages of honor. When he was of an age to decide on his profession, he joined the Fathers of the Oratory, and became an abbé. He was a

ver and an ambitious man, but as often happens to

the greatest geniuses, he had never had an opportunity of making himself known.

Some time before the period of which we are writing, he had again fallen in with the Marquis de Pompadour, who was seeking a man of spirit and enterprise to be the secretary of Madame du Maine. The marquis frankly showed Brigaud to what perils the situation would expose him in the existing condition of affairs. Brigaud weighed for an instant the good and the evil chances, and as the former appeared to predominate, he accepted the position.

Of these four men, D'Harmental was personally acquainted with only the Marquis de Pompadour, whom he had often met at the house of Monsieur de Courcillon, his son-in-law, a distant relative of the D'Harmentals.

When D'Harmental entered the room, Monsieur de Polignac, Monsieur de Malezieux, and Monsieur de Pompadour were standing talking at the fireplace, and the Abbé Brigaud was seated at a table arranging some papers.

"Gentlemen," said the Duchesse du Maine, "here is the brave champion of whom the Baron de Valef has spoken to us, and who has been brought here by your dear De Launay, Monsieur de Malezieux. If his name and antecedents are not sufficient to stand sponsor for him, I will answer for him personally."

"Presented thus by your Highness," said Malezieux, "we shall see in him not only a companion, but a chief, whom we are ready to follow wherever he may lead."

"My dear D'Harmental," said the Marquis de Pompadour, extending his hand to him, "we were already relatives, now we are brothers."

"Welcome, Monsieur!" said the Cardinal de Polignac, in the unctuous tone habitual to him, and which contrasted so strangely with the coldness of his countenance.

The Abbé Brigaud raised his head, turned it toward the chevalier with a movement of the neck like that of a serpent, and fixed on D'Harmental two little eyes, brilliant as those of the lynx.

"Gentlemen," said D'Harmental, after answering each of them by a bow, "I am new and strange among you, and, above all, ignorant of what is going on, or in what manner I can serve you; but though my word has been engaged to you for only a few minutes, my devotion to your cause is of many years' standing. I beg you, therefore, to grant me the confidence so graciously claimed for me by her Highness. All that I shall ask after that will be a speedy occasion to prove myself worthy of it."

"Well said!" cried the Duchesse du Maine; "commend me to a soldier for going straight to the point! No, Monsieur d'Harmental, we will have no secrets from you; and for the opportunity you require, which will place each of us in our proper position, we shall not, I hope, have long to wait."

"Pardon, Madame la Duchesse," interrupted the cardinal, who was playing uneasily with his lace cravat, "but from the way you talk, the chevalier will think that the affair is a conspiracy."

"And what is it, then, Cardinal?" asked the duchess, impatiently.

"It is," said the cardinal, "a council, — secret, it is true, but in no degree reprehensible, — in which we only seek a means of remedying the misfortunes of the State, and enlightening France on her true interests, by recalling the last will of King Louis XIV."

"Stay, Cardinal!" said the duchess, stamping her foot; "you will kill me with impatience by your circumlocutions! Chevalier," she continued, addressing

D'Harmental, "do not listen to his Eminence, who at this moment, doubtless, is thinking of his 'Anti-Lucrèce.' If it had been a simple council, the talents of his Eminence would soon have extricated us from our troubles, and we should have had no need of you. But it is a genuine conspiracy against the regent, — a conspiracy which includes the King of Spain, Cardinal Alberoni, the Duc du Maine, myself, the Marquis de Pompadour, Monsieur de Malezieux, l'Abbé Brigaud, Valef, yourself, the cardinal himself, who is the president, and which will include half the parliament and three parts of France. This is the matter in hand, Chevalier. Are you content, Cardinal? Have I spoken clearly, gentlemen?"

"Madame!" murmured Malezieux, joining his hands before her with more devotion than he would have manifested before the Virgin.

"No, no! stop, Malezeiux!" said the duchess; "but the cardinal enrages me with his half-measures. *Mon Dieu!* are these eternal waverings worthy of a man? For myself, I do not ask a sword, I do not ask a dagger; give me but a nail, and I, a woman, and almost a dwarf, will go, like a new Jael, and drive it into the temple of this other Sisera. Then all will be finished; and if I fail, no one but myself will be compromised."

Monsieur de Polignac sighed deeply; Pompadour burst out laughing; Malezieux tried to calm the duchess; and Brigaud bent his head, and went on writing as if he had heard nothing. As to D'Harmental, he would have kissed the hem of her dress, so superior was this woman in his eyes to the four men who surrounded her.

At this moment they heard the sound of a carriage, which drove into the courtyard and stopped at the door. The person expected was doubtless some one of importance, for there was an instant silence, and the Duchesse

du Maine, in her impatience, went herself to open the door.

"Well?" she asked.

"He is here," said a voice in the corridor, which D'Harmental recognized as that of the Bat.

"Enter, enter, Prince," said the duchess; "we wait for you."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE DE CELLAMARE.

Upon this invitation there entered a tall, thin, grave man, of dark complexion, who at a single glance took in everything in the room, animate and inanimate. The chevalier recognized the ambassador of their Catholic Majesties, the Prince de Cellamare.

"Well, Prince," asked the duchess, "what have you to tell us?"

"I have to tell you, Madame," replied the prince, kissing her hand respectfully, and throwing his cloak on a chair, "that your serene Highness had better change coachmen. I predict misfortune if you retain in your service the fellow who drove me here. He seems to me to be some one employed by the regent to break your Highness's neck and those of your friends."

Every one began to laugh, and particularly the coachman himself, who, without ceremony, had entered behind the prince. Throwing his hat and cloak on a seat, he showed himself a man of high bearing, from thirty-five to forty years old, with the lower part of his face hidden by a black handkerchief.

"Do you hear, my dear Laval, what the prince says of you?" asked the duchess.

"Yes, yes," said Laval; "it is worth while to give him Montmorencies to be treated like that. Ah, Monsieur le Prince, the first gentlemen in France are not good enough for your coachmen? *Peste!* you are difficult to please.

Have you many coachmen at Naples who date from Robert le Fort?"

"What! was it you, my dear Count?" said the prince, holding out his hand to him.

"Myself, Prince. Madame la Duchesse sent away her coachman to keep Lent with his family, and engaged me for this night. She thought it safer."

"And Madame la Duchesse did right," said the cardinal. "One cannot take too many precautions."

"Ah, your Eminence," said Laval, "I should like to know if you would be of the same opinion after passing half the night on the box of a carriage, first to bring Monsieur d'Harmental from the opera ball, and then to take the prince from the Hôtel Colbert."

"What!" said D'Harmental, "was it you, Monsieur le Comte, who had the goodness —"

"Yes, young man," replied Laval, "it was I; and I would have gone to the end of the world to bring you here, for I know you. You are a gallant gentleman; you were one of the first to enter Denain, and you took Albemarle. You were fortunate enough not to leave half your jaw there, as I left half of mine in Italy. It would have been a further motive for taking away your regiment — which they have done, however, without that reason."

"We will restore you that, Chevalier, a hundredfold, you may be assured," said the duchess; "but now let us speak of Spain. Prince, you have news from Alberoni, Pompadour tells me."

"Yes, your Highness."

"What is it?"

"Both good and bad. His Majesty Philip V. is in one of his melancholy moods, and will not determine upon anything. He will not believe in the treaty of the quadruple alliance."

"Will not believe in it!" cried the duchess; "and the treaty ought to be signed now. In a week Dubois will have brought it here."

"I know it, your Highness," replied Cellamare, coldly; "but his Catholic Majesty does not."

"Then he abandons us to ourselves?"

"Why — yes, practically."

"What becomes, then, of the queen's fine promises, and the empire she pretends to have over her husband?"

"She promises to prove it to you, Madame," replied the prince, "when something is done."

"Yes," said the Cardinal de Polignac; "and then she will fail in that promise."

"No, your Eminence; I will answer for her."

"What I see most clearly in all this," said Laval, "is that we must compromise the king. Once compromised, he must go on.'

"Now, then," said Cellamare, "we are coming to business."

"But how to compromise him," asked the Duchesse du Maine, "without a letter from him, without even a verbal message, and at five hundred leagues' distance?"

"Has he not his representative at Paris, and is not that representative in your house at this very moment, Madame?"

"Prince," said the duchess, "you have more extended powers than you are willing to admit."

"No; my powers are limited to telling you that the citadel of Toledo and the fortress of Saragossa are at your service. Find the means of making the regent enter there, and their Catholic Majesties will close the door on him so securely that he will not leave it again, I promise you."

"It is impossible," said Monsieur de Polignac.

"Impossible! and why?" cried D'Harmental. "On the contrary, what is more simple? Nothing is necessary but eight or ten determined men, a well-closed carriage, and relays to Bayonne."

"I have already offered to undertake it," said Laval.

"And I," said Pompadour.

"You cannot," said the duchess; "the regent knows you, and if the thing failed, you would be lost."

"It is a pity," said Cellamare, coldly; "for once arrived at Toledo or Saragossa, there is greatness in store for him who shall have succeeded."

"And the blue ribbon," added Madame du Maine, "on his return to Paris."

"Oh, silence, I beg, Madame!" said D'Harmental; "for if your Highness says such things, you will give to devotion the air of ambition, and rob it of all its merit. I was going to offer myself for the enterprise, — I, who am unknown to the regent; but now I hesitate. And yet I venture to believe myself worthy of the confidence of your Highness, and able to justify it."

"What, Chevalier!" cried the duchess, "you would risk —"

"My life; it is all I have to risk. I thought I had already offered it, and that your Highness had accepted it. Was I mistaken?"

"No, no, Chevalier," said the duchess, quickly; "and you are a brave and loyal gentleman. I have always believed in presentiments; and from the moment Valef pronounced your name, telling me that you were what I find you to be, I had a presentiment that by your aid we should succeed. Gentlemen, you hear what the chevalier says; in what can you assist him?"

"In whatever he may want," said Laval and Pompadour.

"The coffers of their Catholic Majesties are at his dis-

posal," said the Prince de Cellamare, "and he may make free use of them."

"I thank you, gentlemen," said D'Harmental, turning toward the Comte de Laval and the Marquis de Pompadour; "but known as you are, you would only make the enterprise more difficult. Occupy yourselves only in obtaining for me a passport for Spain, as if I had the charge of some prisoner of importance; that ought to be easy."

"I undertake it," said the Abbé Brigaud; "I will get from D'Argenson a paper all prepared, which will need only to be filled in."

"Excellent Brigaud!" said Pompadour; "he does not speak often, but he speaks to the purpose."

"It is he who should be made cardinal," said the duchess, "rather than certain great noblemen of my acquaintance; but as soon as we can dispose of the blue and the red, be easy, gentlemen, we shall not be miserly. Now, Chevalier, you have heard what the prince said. If you want money—"

"Unfortunately," replied D'Harmental, "I am not rich enough to refuse his Excellency's offer, and when I have arrived at the end of about a thousand pistoles which I have at home, I must have recourse to you."

"To him, to me, to us all, Chevalier; for each one in such circumstances should tax himself according to his means. I have little ready money, but I have many diamonds and pearls; therefore want for nothing, I beg. All the world has not your disinterestedness, and there are services which must be bought with gold."

"But, Monsieur," said the cardinal, "have you reflected on the enterprise you are undertaking? If you should be caught!"

"Your Eminence need have no concern," replied D'Harmental, contemptuously. "I have sufficient grounds of

complaint against the regent for it to be believed, if I were taken, that it was an affair between him and me, and that my vengeance was entirely personal."

"But," said the Comte de Laval, "you must have an assistant of some kind in this enterprise, — some one on whom you can count. Have you any one?"

"I think so," replied D'Harmental. "However, I must be informed every morning what the regent will do in the evening. Monsieur le Prince de Cellamare, as ambassador, must have his secret police."

"Yes," said the prince, embarrassed, "I have a few persons who report to me —"

"That is just the thing!" said D'Harmental.

"Where do you lodge?" asked the cardinal.

"At my own house, Monseigneur, Rue de Richelieu, No. 74."

"And how long have you lived there?"

"Three years."

"Then you are too well known there, Monsieur; you must change quarters. The persons who visit you there are known, and the sight of strange faces would give rise to questions."

"This time your Eminence is right," said D'Harmental. "I will seek another lodging in some retired neighborhood."

"I will take care of that," said Brigaud; "my costume does not excite suspicion. I will engage you a lodging as if for a young man from the country, who has been recommended to me, and has come to occupy a place in an office."

"Truly, my dear Brigaud," said the Marquis de Pompadour, "you are like the princess in the 'Arabian Nights,' who never opened her mouth but to drop pearls."

"Well, it is a settled thing, Monsieur l'Abbé," said

D'Harmental; "I reckon on you, and I shall announce at home that I am going to leave Paris for a three months' trip."

"Everything is settled, then," said the Duchesse du Maine, joyfully. "This is the first time that I have been able to see clearly into our affairs, Chevalier, and we owe it to you. I will not forget it."

"Gentlemen," said Malezieux, pulling out his watch, "I would observe that it is four o'clock in the morning, and that we shall kill our dear duchess with fatigue."

"You are mistaken," said the duchess; "such nights rest me, and it is long since I have spent one so pleasantly."

"Prince," said Laval, "you must be contented with the coachman whom you wished discharged, unless you would prefer driving yourself, or going on foot."

"No, indeed," said the prince; "I will risk it. I am a Neapolitan, and believe in omens. If you overturn me, it will be a sign that we must stay where we are; if you conduct me safely, it will be a sign that we may go on."

"Pompadour, will you take back Monsieur d'Harmental?" said the duchess.

"Willingly," said the marquis. "It is a long time since we met, and we have a hundred things to say to each other."

"Cannot I take leave of my sprightly Bat?" asked D'Harmental; "for I do not forget that it is to her I owe the happiness of having offered my services to your Highness."

"De Launay!" cried the duchess, conducting the Prince de Cellamare and the Comte de Laval to the door, "De Launay, here is Monsieur le Chevalier d'Harmental, who says you are the greatest sorceress he has ever known."

"Well!" said she who has left us such charming

memoirs, under the name of Madame de Staal, "do you believe in my prophecies now, Monsieur le Chevalier?"

"I believe, because I hope," replied the chevalier. "But now that I know the fairy that sent you, it is not your predictions that astonish me the most. How were you so well informed about the past, and above all, about the present?"

"Well, De Launay," said the duchess, smiling, "be kind, and do not torment the chevalier any longer, or he will believe us to be two witches, and will be afraid of us."

"Was there not one of your friends, Chevalier," asked Mademoiselle de Launay, "who left you this morning in the Bois de Boulogne to come and say adieu to us?"

"Valef! It is Valef!" cried D'Harmental. "I understand now."

"See, now!" said Madame du Maine, "in the place of Œdipus you would have been devoured ten times over by the Sphinx."

"But the mathematics; but the anatomy; but Virgil?" replied D'Harmental.

"Do you not know, Chevalier," said Malezieux, mixing in the conversation, "that we never call her anything here but our *savante?* — with the exception of Chaulieu, who calls her his flirt, and his coquette; but all by way of poetical license."

"Why," added the duchess, "the other day we let her loose on Duvernoy, our doctor, and she beat him at anatomy!"

"And," said the Marquis de Pompadour, taking D'Harmental's arm to lead him away, "the good man, in his disappointment, declared that there was no other girl in France who understood the human frame so well."

"Ah," said the Abbé Brigaud, folding his papers,

"here is the first *savant* on record who has been known to make a *bon-mot*. It is true, he did not intend it."

And D'Harmental and Pompadour, having taken leave of the duchess, retired laughing, followed by the Abbé Brigaud, who reckoned on them to drive him home.

"Well," said Madame du Maine, addressing the Cardinal de Polignac, "does your Eminence still find it such a terrible thing to conspire?"

"Madame," replied the cardinal, who could not understand that any one could laugh when his head was in danger, "I will ask you the same question when we are all in the Bastille." And he went away with the good chancellor, deploring the ill-luck which had thrown him into such a rash enterprise.

The duchess looked after him with a contempt which she could not disguise; then when she was alone with Mademoiselle de Launay, "My dear Sophie," said she, joyously, "let us put out our lantern, for I think that at last we have found a man!"

CHAPTER VII.

ALBERONI.

When D'Harmental awoke, he thought he had had a dream. Events had, during the last thirty-six hours, succeeded one another with such rapidity that he had been carried away, as by a whirlpool, without knowing whither he was going. Now, for the first time, he had leisure to reflect on the past and the future.

We are living in a time when every one has conspired more or less. We know, therefore, from our own experience what the natural process is in such cases. After entering upon an engagement in a moment of exaltation, one's first feeling, as he glances at his new position, is a feeling of regret for having been so forward. Then by degrees one familiarizes himself with the idea of the dangers to which he is exposed. Imagination, always so indulgent, removes them from sight, and presents instead the ambitions that may be fulfilled. Then pride steps in; one understands that he has suddenly become a secret power in that State in which yesterday he was nothing at all. He walks along proudly, with head erect, passing contemptuously those who lead an ordinary life; he cradles himself in his hopes; he sleeps in the clouds; and some day he wakes conquering or conquered, — carried on the shoulders of the people, or broken by the wheels of that machine called the government.

Thus it was with D'Harmental. The age in which he lived saw the League on its horizon, and almost touched

the Fronde. A single generation of men had intervened since the cannon of the Bastille had supported the rebellion of the great Condé. During that interval Louis XIV. had filled the scene, it is true, with his omnipotent will; but Louis XIV. was no more, and the grandchildren thought that on the same theatre of action, and with the same machines, they could play the same game their fathers had played.

After a few moments' reflection, D'Harmental saw things in the same light in which he had seen them the day before, and congratulated himself upon having taken the highest place among such people as the Montmorencies and the Polignacs. His family had transmitted to him much of that adventurous chivalry so greatly in vogue under Louis XIII., and which Richelieu with his scaffolds, and Louis XIV. with his antechambers, had not quite been able to destroy. There was something romantic in enlisting himself, a young man, under the banners of a woman, and that woman a granddaughter of the great Condé. And besides, one holds so lightly to life at twenty-six years of age, that he is continually risking it in enterprises far less serious than that in which D'Harmental had become the chief.

D'Harmental resolved to lose no time in preparing to keep the promises he had made. He did not conceal from himself that from that moment he belonged to himself no longer; that the eyes of all the conspirators, from Philip V. to the Abbé Brigaud, were upon him; and that on his courage and prudence depended the destinies of two kingdoms and the politics of the world.

At this epoch the regent was the keystone of the arch of the European edifice; and France was beginning to take, if not by arms, at least by diplomacy, that influence which she had unfortunately not always maintained.

Placed at the centre of the triangle formed by the three great powers, with eyes fixed on Germany, one arm extended toward England, and the other toward Spain, ready to turn on any one of these three States that should not treat her according to her dignity, she had assumed, under the Duc d'Orléans, an attitude of calm strength which she had never had, even under Louis XIV.

This arose from the division of interests consequent on the usurpation of William of Orange, and the accession of Philip V. to the throne of Spain. Faithful to his old hatred against the stadtholder of Holland, who had refused him his daughter, Louis XIV. had constantly advanced the pretensions of James II., and after his death, of the Chevalier de Saint-George. Faithful to his compact with Philip V., he had constantly aided his grandson against the emperor, with men and money; and weakened by this double war, he had been reduced to the shameful treaty of Utrecht. But at the death of the old king all was changed, and the regent had adopted a very different line of conduct. The treaty of Utrecht was only a truce, which had been broken from the moment when England and Holland did not pursue common interests with those of France.

In consequence, the regent had first of all held out his hand to George I., and the treaty of the triple alliance had been signed at La Haye, — by Dubois in the name of France, by General Cadogan for England, and by the pensionary Heinsius for Holland. This was a great step toward the pacification of Europe, but it was not final; the interests of Austria and Spain were still in suspense. Charles VI. would not recognize Philip V. as King of Spain; and Philip V., on his part, would not renounce his rights over those provinces of the Spanish empire

which the treaty of Utrecht, to the injury of the throne of Philip II., had ceded to the emperor.

The regent strove, by friendly negotiations, to bring Charles VI. to recognize Philip V. as King of Spain, and proposed, by the use of force if necessary, to induce Philip V. to abandon his pretensions to the provinces transferred to the emperor.

It was in the hope of bringing these things about that the regent had sent Dubois to London, where he was promoting the treaty of the quadruple alliance with even more zeal than he had bestowed on that of La Haye.

Now, this treaty of the quadruple alliance, in uniting the interests of France, England, Holland, and the empire, would nullify every claim of any other State which was not approved by the four powers. In this possibility were involved all the apprehensions of Philip V., or rather, of Cardinal Alberoni; for as to Philip V., if only he had a woman's company and a *prie-Dieu*, he was but little concerned with what took place elsewhere than in his chamber and his chapel.

But it was not so with Alberoni. His was one of those extraordinary fortunes which one sees, always with new astonishment, spring up around a throne, — one of those caprices of destiny which chance raises and destroys; like a gigantic waterspout, which advances on the ocean, threatening to annihilate everything, but which is dispersed into vapor by a stone thrown from the hand of a sailor; or like an avalanche, which threatens to swallow towns and fill up valleys, because a bird in its flight has detached a flake of snow on the summit of the mountain.

A curious history might be written of great results produced by trivial causes from the time of the Greeks down to our own day. The love of Helen brought on the Trojan War, and changed the destiny of Greece. The viola-

tion of Lucretia drove the Tarquins from Rome. An insulted husband conducted Brennus to the Capitoline Hill. La Cava introduced the Moors into Spain. A poor jest written by a young fop upon the chair of an old Doge nearly overthrew Venice. The escape of Dearbhorgil with Mac-Murchad led to the subjugation of Ireland. The order given to Cromwell to leave the vessel on which he had already embarked for America resulted in the execution of Charles I. and the fall of the Stuarts. A discussion between Louis XIV. and Louvois about a window of Trianon caused the Holland War. A glass of water spilled upon the dress of Mistress Marsham deprived the Duke of Marlborough of his command, and saved France by the treaty of Utrecht. In short, Europe was almost involved in war because Monsieur de Vendôme had received the Bishop of Parma while seated upon his commode.

This last-mentioned incident was the beginning of Alberoni's fortune.

Alberoni was born in a gardener's cottage, and as a child he was the bell-ringer. When still a young man, he exchanged his smock-frock for a surplice. He was of a merry and jesting disposition. The Duke of Parma heard him laugh one day so gayly that the poor duke, who did not laugh every day, asked who it was that was so merry, and had him called. Alberoni related to him some grotesque adventure. His Highness laughed heartily, and finding that it was pleasant to laugh sometimes, attached him to his person. Little by little, while amusing himself with his jester's tales, the duke discovered that the fellow had talent, and he fancied that this talent was applicable to public affairs.

It was at this time that the poor Bishop of Parma came back, deeply mortified at his reception by the generalissimo of the French army. The susceptibility of this

envoy might compromise the grave interests which his Highness had to discuss with France. His Highness judged that Alberoni was a man whom nothing could humiliate, and he sent the abbé to finish the negotiation which the bishop had left unfinished.

Monsieur de Vendôme, who had not put himself out for a bishop, did not do so for an abbé, and received the second ambassador as he had the first; but instead of following the example of his predecessor, Alberoni found in Monsieur de Vendôme's own situation so much material for merry jests and exaggerated commendation that the affair was finished at once, and he came back to the duke with everything arranged according to his wishes.

The duke found in this success a reason for employing him again. This time Alberoni found Monsieur de Vendôme about sitting down to table, and instead of beginning at once upon business, asked him if he would taste two dishes of his cooking; he then went into the kitchen, and came back with a *soupe au fromage* in one hand, and macaroni in the other. Monsieur de Vendôme found the soup so good that he asked Alberoni to take some with him at his own table. At dessert Alberoni introduced his business; and profiting by the favorable disposition which the dinner had created in Monsieur de Vendôme, he twisted him round his finger.

His Highness was astonished. The greatest genius he had met with never had done so much.

Alberoni had carefully refrained from leaving his receipt behind him; so that the next time it was Monsieur de Vendôme who asked the Duke of Parma if he had nothing else to negotiate with him. His Highness had little difficulty in finding reasons for a third embassy, and sent Alberoni again. The latter was able to persuade his sovereign that he would be more useful to him near

Monsieur de Vendôme than elsewhere, and he persuaded Monsieur de Vendôme that he could not exist without *soupe au fromage* and macaroni. Monsieur de Vendôme attached him to his service, allowed him to become acquainted with his most secret affairs, and made him his chief secretary.

At length Monsieur de Vendôme left for Spain. Alberoni put himself in communication with Madame des Ursins; and when Vendôme died, in 1712, at Tignaros, she gave him, near her, the same post he had occupied near the deceased.

This was another step. The Princesse des Ursins began to get old, — an unpardonable crime in the eyes of Philip V. She resolved to find, to replace Marie de Savoie, a young woman, through whom she might continue to reign over the king. Alberoni proposed the daughter of his old master, whom he represented to be a child without character and without will, who would claim nothing of royalty but the name. The princess was taken by this promise. The marriage was decided on, and the young princess left Italy for Spain.

Her first act of authority was to arrest the Princesse des Ursins, who had come to meet her in a court dress, and to send her back as she was, with her neck uncovered, in a bitter frost, in a carriage of which the guard had broken the window with his elbow, first to Burgos, and then to France, — where she arrived after having been obliged to borrow fifty pistoles from her servants. Her coachman had his arm frozen, and it was cut off.

After his first interview with Elizabeth Farnèse, the king announced to Alberoni that he was prime minister. From that day, thanks to the young queen, who owed him everything, the ex-ringer of bells exercised an unlimited empire over Philip V.

Now this was the dream of Alberoni, who had always prevented Philip V. from recognizing the peace of Utrecht: if the conspiracy succeeded, — if D'Harmental carried off the Duc d'Orléans, and took him to the citadel of Toledo, or the fortress of Saragossa, — Alberoni would get Monsieur du Maine recognized as regent, would withdraw France from the quadruple alliance, throw the Chevalier de Saint-George with the fleet on the English coast, and set Prussia, Sweden, and Russia, with whom he had a treaty of alliance, at variance with Holland. The empire would then profit by their dispute to retake Naples and Sicily, would assure Tuscany to the second son of the King of Spain, would reunite the Catholic Netherlands to France, give Sardinia to the Dukes of Savoy, Commachio to the Pope, and Mantua to the Venetians. He would make himself the soul of the great league of the South against the North, and if Louis XV. died, would crown Philip V. king of half the world.

It must be confessed that this was not badly planned for a cook.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PACHA OF OUR ACQUAINTANCE.

All these affairs were now in the hands of a young man twenty-six years of age; and naturally, he was at first somewhat dismayed in view of the responsibility which weighed upon him. While he was sounding the depth of his perplexities, the Abbé Brigaud entered. He had already found a lodging for the chevalier at No. 5 Rue du Temps-Perdu, —a small furnished room, suitable to a young man from the country, who came to seek his fortune in Paris. He brought him also two thousand pistoles from the Prince de Cellamare.

D'Harmental wished to refuse them, for it seemed to him that if he should accept them he would be simply serving for wages, instead of yielding to the impulses of conscience and devotion; but the Abbé Brigaud explained to him that in such an enterprise there are susceptibilities to conquer, and accomplices to pay; and that besides, if the affair succeeded, he would have to set out instantly for Spain, and perhaps make his way by force of gold. Brigaud carried away a complete suit of the chevalier's, as a pattern for a new one suitable for a clerk in an office.

Abbé Brigaud was a useful man.

rmental passed the rest of the day in preparing for ended journey, and destroyed, to guard against , every letter which might compromise a friend. night came on, he went toward the Rue St. Honoré,

where — thanks to La Normande — he hoped to have news of Captain Roquefinette. In fact, from the moment that a lieutenant for his enterprise had been spoken of, he had thought of this man, who had given him, as his second, a proof of his careless courage. He had instantly recognized in him one of those adventurers who are always ready to sell their blood for a good price, and who in time of peace, when their swords are useless to the State, place them at the service of individuals. Such a man must have secret relations with those nameless persons who form the groundwork of conspiracies, — machines who are put in operation without knowing either by what spring they are started into action or what results they produce; and who, whether the affair fails or succeeds, disperse as soon as it comes to a head, sinking into the popular abyss, like ghosts dropping through trap-doors on the stage of a theatre. On becoming a conspirator, one always becomes superstitious; and D'Harmental fancied that it was an intervention of Providence which had introduced him to Roquefinette.

The chevalier, without being a regular customer, went occasionally to the tavern of La Fillon. It was quite fashionable at that time to go and drink at her house. D'Harmental was to her neither her "son," — a name which she gave to all her regular visitors, — nor her "gossip," as she called Abbé Dubois, but simply Monsieur le Chevalier, — a mark of respect which would have been considered rather a humiliation by most of the young men of fashion. La Fillon was therefore somewhat surprised when D'Harmental asked to see one of her boarders, called La Normande.

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, Monsieur le Chevalier!" said she, "I am really distressed; but La Normande has just been engaged until to-morrow evening."

"*Peste!*" said the chevalier, "what madness!"

"Oh, it is not madness," replied La Fillon; "it is a caprice of an old friend to whom I am devoted."

"When he has money, I suppose?"

"You are mistaken. I give him credit up to a certain sum. It is a weakness, but one cannot help being grateful. He started me in the world; for though you see me now, Monsieur le Chevalier, receiving in my house the best people in Paris, including the regent, yet I am only the daughter of a poor chair-bearer. Oh, I am not like your beautiful duchesses who deny their origin; nor like your dukes and peers who fabricate genealogies for themselves. No, what I am, I owe to my own merit; and I am proud of it."

"Then," said the chevalier, who was not particularly interested in La Fillon's history, "you say that La Normande will be here to-morrow evening?"

"She is here, Monsieur, — she is here; only, as I told you, she has business with my old fox of a captain."

"But, my dear Présidente" (this was a name sometimes given to La Fillon, in allusion to the présidente of the same name), "do you think, by chance, your captain may be my captain?"

"What is your captain's name?"

"Captain Roquefinette."

"It is he himself."

"He is here?"

"In person."

"Well, he is the person I want to see; and I asked for La Normande only to get his address."

ıen it is all right," said the présidente.

ve the kindness to send for him."

, he would not come down for the regent himself.

want to see him, you must go up."

"To what room?"

"To room No. 2, where you supped the other evening with the Baron de Valef. Oh, when he has money, nothing is too good for him. Although he is but a captain, he has the heart of a king."

"Better and better!" said D'Harmental, mounting the staircase, without suffering his mind to be diverted from his enterprise by the recollection of the misadventure which had happened to him in that room; "'the heart of a king,' my dear Présidente, — that is exactly what I want."

If D'Harmental had not known the room in question, the voice of the captain would soon have served him for a guide.

"Now, my little loves," shouted the captain, "the third and last verse, and together in the chorus!" Then he began singing in a magnificent bass voice, and four or five female voices took up the chorus.

"That is better," said the captain; "now let us have the 'Battle of Malplaquet.'"

"No, no," said a voice; "I have had enough of your battle."

"What! enough of it, — a battle in which I took part! *morbleu!*"

"That is nothing to me. I like a romance better than all your wicked battle-songs, full of oaths." And she began to sing, "Linval loved Arsène —"

"Silence!" said the captain. "Am I not master here? As long as I have any money, I will be served as I like. When I have no more, that will be another thing; then you may sing what you like, and I shall have nothing to say to it."

It appeared that the captain's companions thought it beneath the dignity of their sex to subscribe to such a

pretension, for there was such a noise that D'Harmental thought it best to announce himself; he therefore knocked on the door.

"Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up," said the captain.

D'Harmental followed the instruction which was given him in the words of Little Red Riding-hood, and having entered, saw the captain lying on a couch before the remains of an ample dinner, leaning on a cushion, a woman's shawl over his shoulders, a great pipe in his mouth, and a cloth rolled round his head like a turban. Three or four girls were standing round him. On a chair near him was placed his coat, on which was to be seen a new shoulder-knot, his hat with a new lace, and the famous sword which had suggested to Ravanne the facetious comparison to his mother's spit.

"What! is it you, Chevalier?" cried the captain. "You find me like Monsieur de Bonneval, — in my seraglio, and surrounded by my slaves. You do not know Monsieur de Bonneval, ladies? He was a pacha with three tails, who, like me, could not bear romances, but who understood how to live. Heaven preserve me from such a fate as his!"

"Yes, it is I, Captain," said D'Harmental, unable to keep from laughing at the grotesque group which presented itself. "I see you did not give me a false address, and I congratulate you on your veracity."

"Welcome, Chevalier," said the captain. "Ladies, I beg you to serve Monsieur exactly as you serve me, in all respects, and to sing him whatever songs he likes. Sit down, Chevalier, and eat and drink as if you were at home, particularly as it is your horse we are eating and drinking. He is already more than half gone, poor animal, but the remains are good."

"Thank you, Captain, I have just dined; and I have only one word to say to you, if you will permit it."

"No, *pardieu!* I do not permit it," said the captain, "unless it is about another engagement,—that would come before everything. La Normande, give me my sword."

"No, Captain; it is on business," interrupted the chevalier.

"Oh, if it is on business, I am your humble servant; but I am a greater tyrant than the tyrants of Thebes or Corinth,—Archias, Pelopidas, Leonidas, or any other fool with a name ending in 'as,' who put off business till to-morrow. I have enough money to last till to-morrow evening; then after to-morrow, business."

"But at least after to-morrow, Captain, I may count upon you?"

"For life or death, Chevalier."

"I believe that the postponement is prudent."

"*Prudentissime!*" said the captain. "Athenaïs, light my pipe. La Normande, pour me out something to drink."

"The day after to-morrow, then, Captain?"

"Yes; where shall I find you?"

"Listen," replied D'Harmental, speaking so as to be heard by no one but him. "Walk, from ten to eleven o'clock in the morning, in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. Look up; you will be called from somewhere, and you must mount till you meet some one you know. A good breakfast will await you."

"All right, Chevalier," replied the captain; "from ten to eleven in the morning. Excuse me if I do not conduct you to the door, but you know it is not the custom with Turks."

The chevalier made a sign with his hand that he dis-

pensed with this formality, and having closed the door behind him, descended the staircase. He was only on the fourth step when he heard the captain begin the famous song of the dragoons of Malplaquet, which has perhaps caused as much blood to be shed in duels as had been poured out in the battle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GARRET.

THE next day the Abbé Brigaud came to the chevalier's house at the same hour as before; he was a very punctual man. He brought with him three things particularly useful to the chevalier, — clothes, a passport, and the report of the Prince de Cellamare's police respecting what the regent was intending to do on the present day, March 24, 1718. The clothes were simple, as became the cadet of a bourgeois family come to seek his fortune in Paris. The chevalier tried them on, and thanks to his own good looks, found that plain as they were, they became him admirably. The abbé shook his head. He would have preferred that the chevalier should not have looked quite so well; but this was an irreparable misfortune, to which he must be resigned.

The passport was in the name of Señor Diego, steward of the noble house of Oropesa, who had a commission to bring back to Spain a sort of maniac, a bastard of the said house, whose mania was to believe himself regent of France. This was a precaution taken to meet anything that the Duc d'Orléans might call out from the bottom of the carriage; and as the passport was according to rule, signed by the Prince de Cellamare, and "viséd" by Monsieur Voyer d'Argenson, there was no reason why the regent, once in the carriage, should not arrive safely at Pampeluna, when all would be done. The signature of Monsieur Voyer d'Argenson was imitated with a fidelity

which did honor to the caligraphers of the Prince de Cellamare.

As to the report, it was a masterpiece of clearness; and we reproduce it word for word, to give an idea of the regent's life, and of the manner in which the Spanish ambassador's police was conducted. It was dated two o'clock in the morning.

"To-day the regent will rise late. There has been a supper in his private rooms; Madame d'Averne was there for the first time instead of Madame de Parabère. The other women were the Duchesse de Falaris, and Saleri, maid of honor to Madame. The men were the Marquis de Broglie, the Comte de Nocé, the Marquis de Canillac, the Duc de Brancas, and the Chevalier de Simiane. As to the Marquis de Lafare and Monsieur de Fargy, they were detained in bed by an illness of which the cause is unknown. At noon there will be a council. The regent will communicate to the Duc du Maine, the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Saint-Simon, the Duc de Guiche, etc., the project of the treaty of the quadruple alliance, which the Abbé Dubois has sent him, announcing his return in three or four days.

"The rest of the day is given entirely to paternal occupations. The day before yesterday the regent married his daughter by La Desmarets, who was brought up by the nuns of St. Denis. She dines with her husband at the Palais Royal, and after dinner the regent takes her to the opera, to the box of Madame Charlotte de Bavière. La Desmarets, who has not seen her daughter for six years, is told that if she wishes to see her, she can come to the theatre. The regent, in spite of his caprice for Madame d'Averne, still pays court to the Marquise de Sabran, who piques herself on her fidelity — not to her husband, but to the Duc de Richelieu. To advance his affairs, the regent has appointed Monsieur de Sabran his *maître d'hôtel*."

"I hope that is business well done," said the Abbé Bri-
, when the chevalier had finished reading the report.
Yes, my dear Abbé," replied D'Harmental; "but if

the regent does not give us greater opportunities for executing our enterprise, it will not be easy for me to take him to Spain."

"Patience, patience!" said Brigaud; "there is time for everything. If there had been an opportunity to-day, you probably would not have been able to profit by it."

"No; you are right."

"Then you see that what God does is well done. He has left us this day; let us profit by it to move."

The removal was neither a long nor a difficult business. D'Harmental took his treasure, some books, and the packet which contained his wardrobe, and drove to the abbé's house. Then he sent away his carriage, saying he should go into the country in the evening, and should be away ten or twelve days. Then having changed his elegant clothes for those more in keeping with the part he was about to play, he went, conducted by the Abbé Brigaud, to take possession of his new lodging. It was a room, or rather an attic, with a closet, on the fourth story at No. 5 Rue du Temps-Perdu. The proprietor of the house was an acquaintance of the Abbé Brigaud; therefore, thanks to his recommendation, special preparation had been made for the accommodation of the young provincial. He found beautifully white curtains, very fine linen, and a well-furnished library; so he saw at once that if not so well off as in his own apartments, he should be tolerably comfortable.

Madame Denis (this was the name of the abbé's friend) was waiting to do the honors of the room to her future lodger. She pointed out to him all its advantages, and assured him that but for the hard times he would have had to pay twice the rent. She said that her house was one of the most favorably known in that quarter, and promised that there would be no noise to disturb him at

his work, since, the street being too narrow for two carriages to pass each other, coachmen very rarely drove into it. To all this the chevalier replied in a manner so modest that on going down to the first floor, where she lived, Madame Denis particularly recommended him to the care of the porter and his wife. This young man, though in appearance he could certainly compete with the proudest seigneurs of the court, seemed to her far from having the bold and free manners which the young men of the time affected. 'T is true that the Abbé Brigaud, in the name of his pupil's family, had paid her a quarter in advance.

A minute after, the abbé went down to Madame Denis's room and completed her good opinion of his young protégé by telling her that he received absolutely nobody but himself and an old friend of his father. The latter, in spite of brusque manners, which he had acquired in the field, was a highly respectable gentleman. D'Harmental had recommended this precaution for fear the appearance of the captain might frighten Madame Denis if she happened to meet him.

When he was alone, the chevalier, who had already taken the inventory of his own room, resolved to take that of the neighborhood. He soon convinced himself of the truth of what Madame Denis had said about the quietness of the street, for it was not more than ten or twelve feet wide; but this was to him an advantage,— for he thought that if pursued he might, by means of a plank passed from one window to that opposite, escape to the other side of the street. It was therefore important to establish amicable relations with his opposite neighbors.

Unfortunately, they did not seem much disposed to sociability; for not only was the window hermetically sealed, as the time of year demanded, but the curtains

behind it were so closely drawn that there was not the smallest opening through which he could look.

More favored than that of Madame Denis, the house opposite had a fifth story, or rather a terrace. An attic room, just above the window so carefully closed, opened on this terrace. It was probably the residence of some distinguished horticulturist, — for he had succeeded, by means of patience and labor, in transforming this terrace into a garden, containing, in some twelve feet square, a fountain, a grotto, and an arbor. The fountain, indeed, was supplied with water from an upper reservoir, which was fed in winter by the rain, and in summer by what he himself poured into it; the grotto, ornamented with shell-work, and surrounded by a wooden fortress, appeared fit only to shelter an individual of the canine race; and the arbor, entirely stripped of its leaves, appeared for the time fit only for an immense poultry-cage.

D'Harmental admired the active industry of the citizen of Paris who had made for himself a rural resort at the edge of his window. He murmured the famous line of Virgil, "O fortunatos nimium!" and then, since the air was chilly, and there was nothing else to be seen but a monotonous series of roofs and chimneys, he closed his window, sat down in an armchair, put his feet on the hobs, took up a volume by the Abbé de Chaulieu, and began to read the verses addressed to Mademoiselle de Launay, which the Marquis de Pompadour had mentioned to him, and which had a new interest for him now that he was acquainted with the heroine.

The result of this reading was that the chevalier, while smiling at the octogenarian love of the good abbé, discovered that he, less fortunate, was in love with no one. For a short time he had thought he loved Madame d'Averne, and was loved by her; but on her part this

grand passion had not been able to withstand the offer of some jewels from the regent, and the vanity of pleasing him.

Before this infidelity had occurred, the chevalier thought that it would have driven him to despair. It had occurred, and he had fought, because at that time men fought about everything that happened, — probably because duelling was so strictly forbidden. Then he began to perceive how small a place this love had held in his heart. It is true that the events of the last three or four days had diverted his mind to other matters; but the chevalier did not conceal from himself that these events would not have occurred had he been really in love. A great despair would not have allowed him to seek amusement at the *bal-masqué;* and if he had not gone thither, not one of the events which had occurred in so rapid succession and in a manner so unexpected would have had a point of departure.

The chevalier's conclusion from this course of reflection was that he was incapable of a grand passion, and that he was to find his associates among those charming sinners who at that epoch were so much in vogue. He got up, and began to walk up and down his room. While thus employed, he perceived that the window opposite was now wide open; he stopped mechanically, drew back his curtain, and began to examine the room thus exposed.

It was to all appearance occupied by a woman. Near the window, on which a charming little Italian greyhound rested her delicate paws, was an embroidery frame. Opposite the window was an open harpsichord between two music-stands. Some crayon drawings, framed in black wood with a gold bead, were hung on the walls, which were covered with a Persian paper. Curtains of Indian chintz, of the same pattern as the paper, hung behind the

muslin curtains. Through a second window, half-open, he could see the curtains of a recess which probably contained a bed. The rest of the furniture was perfectly simple, but in admirable harmony, which was due evidently, not to the fortune, but to the taste of the modest inhabitant.

An old woman was sweeping, dusting, and arranging the room, profiting by the tenant's absence to do this household work; for there was no one else to be seen in the room, and yet it was clear it was not she who inhabited it. All at once the face of the greyhound — whose great eyes had been wandering till then, with the aristocratic indifference characteristic of that animal — became animated. It leaned its head over into the street, then with a miraculous lightness and address, jumped on the window-sill, and sat there pricking up its long ears and raising one of its paws. The chevalier understood by these signs that the tenant of the little room was approaching. He immediately opened his window; unfortunately it was already too late, — the street was solitary.

At the same moment the greyhound leaped from the window into the room, and ran to the door. D'Harmental concluded that the young lady was mounting the stairs. In order to see her at his ease, he threw himself back and hid behind the curtain; but the old woman came to the window and closed it. The chevalier did not expect this *dénouement*, and was seriously disappointed. There was nothing for him to do but to close his window also, and to go back and put his feet on the hobs.

The affair was not very absorbing, and the chevalier — so fond of companionship and so accustomed to those social trifles which enter into the life of a man of the world — began then to perceive how lonely he should be during the short time he was to remain in that retreat.

He remembered that formerly he also used to play and draw; and he thought that if he had the smallest spinet and some crayons, he could pass the time patiently. He rang for the porter, and asked where he could procure these things. The porter replied that every increase of furniture must be at his own expense; that if he wished for a harpsichord he must hire it; and that as to crayons, he could get them at the shop at the corner of the Rue de Cléry.

D'Harmental gave a double louis to the porter, telling him that in half an hour he wished to have a spinet and everything necessary for drawing. The double louis was an argument which he had found effective more than once. Reproaching himself, however, with having used it this time with a carelessness which gave the lie to his apparent position, he recalled the porter, and told him that he expected for his double louis to have not only paper and crayons, but a month's hire of his instrument.

The porter replied that since he should make the bargain as if it were for himself, the thing was possible; but that D'Harmental must certainly pay for the transportation. He consented, and half an hour afterward was in possession of the desired objects. Such a wonderful place is Paris for every enchanter with a golden wand. The porter, when he went down, told his wife that if the new lodger was not more careful of his money, he would ruin his family; and he showed her two crowns of six francs, which he had saved out of the double louis. The woman took the two crowns from the hands of her husband, calling him a drunkard, and put them into a little bag, hidden under a heap of old clothes, deploring the misfortune of fathers and mothers who bleed themselves to death for such good-for-nothings. This was the funeral oration of the chevalier's double louis.

CHAPTER X.

A BOURGEOIS OF THE RUE DU TEMPS-PERDU.

During this time D'Harmental was seated before the spinet, playing his best. The shopkeeper was a man blessed with a fair conscience, and had sent him an instrument nearly in tune; so that the chevalier began to perceive that he was doing wonders, and almost believed he was born with a genius for music which had awaited for its development the circumstances in which he was now placed. Doubtless there was some truth in this, for in the middle of a brilliant shake he saw, on the other side of the street, five little fingers delicately raising the curtain to see whence came this strange music. Unfortunately, at the sight of those little fingers the chevalier forgot his playing, and turned round quickly on the stool, hoping to see a face behind the hand.

This ill-judged manœuvre destroyed his chances. The mistress of the little room, surprised in the act of curiosity, let the curtain fall. D'Harmental, wounded by this prudery, closed his window, and during the rest of the day paid no attention to his neighbor. The evening he spent in reading, drawing, and playing. He was surprised to find that there were so many minutes in an hour and so many hours in a day. At ten o'clock in the evening he rang for the porter, to give orders for the next day. The porter did not respond; he had been in bed a long time. Madame Denis had said truly that hers was a quiet house. D'Harmental then learned that there were

those who went to bed about the time he ordered his carriage to pay visits.

This set him thinking of the strange manners of that unfortunate class of society who do not know the opera, who do not go to supper-parties, and who sleep all night and are awake all day. He thought one must come to the Rue du Temps-Perdu to see such things, and promised himself to amuse his friends with an account of this singularity.

Meanwhile D'Harmental noticed one thing that pleased him; and this was that his neighbor also was awake. This showed in her a mind superior to that of the vulgar inhabitants of the Rue du Temps-Perdu. He had a notion that only those stay up late who are not sleepy, or who seek amusement. He forgot all those who do so because they are obliged to. At midnight the light in the opposite windows was extinguished; D'Harmental also went to his bed.

The next day the Abbé Brigaud appeared at eight o'clock. He brought D'Harmental the second report of the Prince de Cellamare's secret police. It was in these terms:—

Three o'clock, A. M.

In consequence of the regular life which he led yesterday, the regent has given orders to be called at nine.

He will receive certain persons whom he has appointed to meet at that time

From ten to twelve there will be a public audience.

From twelve to one the regent will be engaged with La Vrillière and Leblanc.

From one to two he will open letters with Torcy.

At half-past two there will be a council, and he will pay the king a visit.

At three o'clock he will go to the tennis-court in the Rue du Seine, to sustain, with Brancas and Canillac, a challenge

against the Duc du Richelieu, the Marquis de Broglie, and the Comte de Gacé.

At six he will go to supper at the Luxembourg with the Duchesse de Berri, and will pass the evening there.

From there he will come back, *without guards*, to the Palais Royal, unless the Duchesse de Berri gives him an escort from hers.

"*Without guards*, my dear Abbé! what do you think of that?" said D'Harmental, beginning to dress. "Does it not make your mouth water?"

"Without guards, yes," replied the abbé; "but with footmen, outriders, a coachman, — persons who do not fight much, it is true, but who cry very loud. Oh, patience, patience, my young friend! You are in a great hurry to be a grandee of Spain."

"No, my dear Abbé; but I am in a hurry to give up living in an attic where I lack everything, and where I am obliged to dress myself alone, as you see. Do you think it is nothing to go to bed at ten o'clock, and dress in the morning without a valet?"

"Yes, but you have music," replied the abbé.

"Ah, indeed!" replied D'Harmental. "Abbé, open my window, I beg, that they may see I receive good company. That will do me honor with my neighbors."

"Ho! ho!" said the abbé, doing what D'Harmental asked; "that is not bad at all."

"How, not bad?" replied D'Harmental; "it is very good, on the contrary. It is from 'Armida,' *pardieu!* The devil take me if I expected to find that in the fourth story of a house in the Rue du Temps-Perdu."

"Chevalier, I predict," said the abbé, "that if the singer be young and pretty, in a week there will be as much trouble to get you away as there is now to keep you here."

"My dear Abbé," said D'Harmental, "if your police were as good as those of the Prince de Cellamare, you would know that I am cured of love for a long time; and here is the proof. Do not think I pass my days in sighing. I beg when you go down you will send me something like a *pâté* and a dozen bottles of good wine. I trust to you. I know you are a connoisseur; besides, sent by you, it will seem like a guardian's attention. Bought by me, it would seem like a pupil's debauch; and I have my provincial reputation to keep up with Madame Denis."

"That is true. I do not ask you what it is for; but I will send it to you."

"And you are right, my dear Abbé. It is for the good of the cause."

"In an hour the *pâté* and the wine will be here."

"When shall I see you again?"

"To-morrow, probably."

"Adieu, then, till to-morrow."

"You send me away?"

"I am expecting somebody."

"Still for the good cause?"

"Yes, I assure you. Go, and may God preserve you!"

"Stay, and may the devil not get hold of you! Remember that it was a woman who got us turned out of our terrestrial paradise. Put no trust in women."

"Amen," said the chevalier, making a parting sign with his hand to the Abbé Brigaud.

Indeed, as the abbé had observed, D'Harmental was in a hurry to see him go. His great love for music, which he had discovered only the day before, had progressed so rapidly that he did not wish his attention called away from what he had just heard. The little which that horrible window, still closed, allowed him to hear, and which

was more of the instrument than of the voice, showed that his neighbor was an excellent musician. The playing was skilful; the voice was sweet and sustained, and had in its high notes and deep vibrations something which awoke an answer in the heart of the listener. At last, after a very difficult and perfectly executed passage, D'Harmental could not help clapping his hands and crying, "Bravo!" As bad luck would have it, this triumph, to which she had not been accustomed, instead of encouraging the musician, frightened her so much that voice and harpsichord stopped at the same instant, and silence immediately succeeded to the melody for which the chevalier had so imprudently manifested his enthusiasm.

In exchange, he saw the door of the room above (which we have said led to the terrace) open, and a hand was stretched out, evidently to ascertain what kind of weather it was. The answer of the weather seemed reassuring, for the hand was almost directly followed by a head covered by a little chintz cap, tied on the forehead by a violet ribbon; and the head was only a few instants in advance of a neck and shoulders clothed in a kind of dressing-gown of the same stuff as the cap. This was not quite enough to enable the chevalier to decide to which sex the individual, who seemed so cautious about exposure to the morning air, belonged. At last, a sort of sunbeam having slipped out between two clouds, the timid occupant of the terrace appeared to be encouraged to come out altogether. D'Harmental then saw, by his black velvet knee-breeches, and by his colored stockings, that the personage who had just entered on the scene was of the masculine gender.

It was the horticulturist of whom we spoke. The bad weather of the preceding days had without doubt deprived him of his morning walk, and had prevented him from giving his garden his ordinary attention; for he

began to walk round in it with apparent anxiety, fearing that some accident had been caused by the wind or rain. But after a careful inspection of the fountain, the grotto, and the arbor, which were the three principal ornaments of the garden, the excellent face of the horticulturist was lighted by a ray of joy, as the terrace had been lighted by a ray of the sun. He perceived, not only that everything was in its place, but that the reservoir was full to overflowing. He thought he might indulge himself in the pleasure of making his fountain play, — a prodigality which ordinarily, following the example of Louis XIV., he allowed himself only on Sundays. He turned the cock, and the jet rose majestically to the height of four or five feet. The good man was so delighted that he began to sing the refrain of an old pastoral song which D'Harmental had heard when he was a baby; and while repeating, —

"Let me go,
And let me play
Beneath the hazel-tree,"

he ran to the window and called aloud, "Bathilde! Bathilde!"

The chevalier understood that there was a communication between the rooms on the fourth and fifth stories, and some relation between the horticulturist and the musician, and thought that perhaps if he remained at the window she would not come out on the terrace; therefore he closed his window with a careless air, taking care to keep a little opening behind the curtain, through which he could see without being seen. What he had foreseen happened. Very soon the head of a charming young girl appeared at the window; but as without doubt the ground, on which he who had summoned her had ventured with so much courage, was too damp, she would not go any farther. The little dog, not less timid than

its mistress, remained near her, resting its white paws on the window-sill, and shaking its head in rejection of every invitation to go farther than its mistress wished to go.

A dialogue ensued between the good man and the young girl; and D'Harmental was able to examine her with the less distraction since his closed window enabled him to see her without hearing her voice. She appeared to have arrived at that attractive period of life when woman, passing from childhood to youth, is in the full bloom of sentiment, grace, and beauty. He saw that she was not less than sixteen nor more than eighteen years of age, and that there existed in her a singular mixture of two races. She had the fair hair, rich complexion, and graceful neck of an English woman, with the black eyes, coral lips, and pearly teeth of a Spaniard. As she applied no coloring matter to her face, and at that time the use of powder on the head was only beginning to be in fashion, — its use being as yet limited to the aristocracy, — her complexion retained its natural hue, and nothing tarnished the delicate tints of her hair.

The chevalier remained as in an ecstasy. Indeed, up to this time he had seen but two classes of women, — the fat and coarse peasants of the Nivernais, with their great feet and hands, their short petticoats, and their hats shaped like a hunting-horn; and the women of the Parisian aristocracy, beautiful without doubt, but with a beauty worn by watching and pleasure, and by that reversing of life which makes them what flowers would be if they saw the sun only on rare occasions, and the vivifying air of the morning and the evening reached them only through the windows of a hot-house. He did not know this intermediate type, if one may call it so, between high society and the country people, which had all the elegance of the one, and all the fresh health of the other.

Thus, as we have said, he remained fixed in his place; and long after the young girl had re-entered, he kept his eyes on the window where this delightful vision had appeared.

The sound of his door opening called him out of his ecstasy; it was the *pâté* and the wine from Abbé Brigaud making their solemn entry into the chevalier's garret. The sight of these provisions reminded him that at the present moment he had something better to do than to abandon himself to contemplation, and that he had given Captain Roquefinette a rendezvous with reference to an affair of the highest importance. He looked at his watch and saw that it was ten o'clock. This was, as the reader will remember, the appointed hour. He sent away the man who had brought the provisions, and said he would lay the cloth himself; then opening his window once more, he sat down to watch for the appearance of Captain Roquefinette.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONTRACT.

HARDLY had D'Harmental taken his position at the window, when he perceived the worthy captain coming round the corner from the Rue Gros-Chenet, his head thrown back, his hand on his hip, and with the martial and decided air of a man who, like the Greek philosopher, carries everything with him. His hat, that thermometer by which his friends could tell the secret state of his finances, and which on his fortunate days was placed as straight on his head as a pyramid on its base, had resumed that miraculous inclination which had so interested the Baron de Valef, and by reason of which one of the points almost touched his right shoulder, while the opposite point might forty years later have given Franklin, if Franklin had known the captain, the first idea of the lightning-rod.

Having advanced about a third of the street's length, the captain looked up, according to his directions, and saw the chevalier just above him. He who waited and he who was waited for exchanged nods; and the captain, having calculated the distance at a glance, and recognized the door which ought to correspond with the window above, stepped over the threshold of Madame Denis's quiet house with as much familiarity as if it had been a tavern. The chevalier shut the window, and drew the curtains with the greatest care, — either in order that his pretty

neighbor might not see him with the captain, or that the captain might not see her.

A moment later D'Harmental heard the sound of his visitor's steps, and the beating of his sword against the balusters. Having arrived at the third story, as the light which came from below was not reinforced by any light from above, the captain found himself in difficulty, not knowing whether to stop where he was or to mount higher. Then after coughing in the most significant manner, and finding that this call remained unnoticed, "*Morbleu!*" said he. "Chevalier, as you probably did not bring me here to break my neck, open your door or call out, so that I may be guided either by the light of heaven or by the sound of your voice; otherwise I shall be lost neither more nor less than was Theseus in the labyrinth." And the captain began to sing in a loud voice:

"Fair Ariadne, I beg of you
Help me, by lending me your clew.
Tonton, tonton, tontaine, tonton!"

The chevalier ran to his door and opened it.

"My friend," said the captain, "the ladder up to your pigeon-house is infernally dark; still, here I am, faithful to the agreement, exact to the time. Ten o'clock was striking as I came over the Pont-Neuf."

"Yes, you are a man of your word, — I see that," said the chevalier, offering his hand to the captain; "but come in at once, — it is important that my neighbors should not notice you."

"In that case I am as dumb as a log," answered the captain; "besides," he added, pointing to the *pâté* and the bottles which covered the table, "you have hit upon the true way of shutting my mouth."

The chevalier shut the door behind the captain and shed the bolt.

"Ah, ah! mystery? So much the better; I am fond of mystery. There is almost always something to be gained when people begin by saying, 'Hush!' In any case, you cannot do better than address yourself to your servant," continued the captain, resorting again to mythological allusions. "You see in me the grandson of Harpocrates, the god of silence; so do not be uneasy."

"That is well, Captain," answered D'Harmental; "for I confess that what I have to say to you is of sufficient importance for me to claim your discretion beforehand."

"It is granted, Chevalier. While I was giving a lesson to little Ravanne, I saw, out of a corner of my eye, that you were a skilful swordsman; and I love brave men. Then in return for a little service of trifling importance, you gave me a horse worth a hundred louis; and I love generous men. Thus, since you are twice my man, why should I not be yours once?"

"Well," said the chevalier, "I see that we understand each other."

"Speak, and I will listen," answered the captain, assuming his gravest air.

"You will listen better seated, my dear guest. Let us go to breakfast."

"You preach like Saint Jean Bouche d'Or, Chevalier," said the captain, taking off his sword and placing that and his hat on the harpsichord; "so that," he continued, sitting down opposite D'Harmental, "one cannot differ from you in opinion. I am here; command the manœuvre, and I will execute it."

"Taste that wine while I cut the *pâté*."

"That is right," said the captain; "let us divide our forces and fight the enemy separately; then let us reunite to exterminate what remains."

And joining practice to theory, the captain seized the

first bottle by the neck, drew the cork, and having poured out a bumper, drank it off with such ease that one would have said that Nature had gifted him with some peculiar faculty of deglutition. However, to do him justice, as soon as he had swallowed it, he perceived that the liquor which he had disposed of so cavalierly merited a more particular attention than he had given it.

"Oh!" said he, clicking his tongue, and putting down his glass with a respectful deliberation, "what have I done, unworthy that I am? I drink nectar as if it were trash, and that at the beginning of the feast! Ah!" he continued, shaking his head, "Roquefinette, my friend, you are getting old. Ten years ago you would have known what it was when the first drop touched your palate, while now you want many trials to know the worth of things. To your health, Chevalier!"

And this time the captain, more circumspect, drank the second glass slowly, and set it down three times before he finished it, winking his eyes in sign of satisfaction. Then when he had finished, "This," he said, "is of the hermitage of 1702, the year of the battle of Friedlingen. If your wine-merchant has much like that, and if he will give credit, let me have his address. I promise him a good customer."

"Captain," answered the chevalier, slipping an enormous slice of *pâté* upon the plate of his guest, "my wine-merchant not only gives credit, but to my friends he gives altogether."

"Oh, the honest man!" cried the captain. Then after a minute's silence, during which a superficial observer would have thought him absorbed in appreciation of the *pâté*, as he had been an instant before in that of the wine, he leaned his two elbows on the table, and looking at D'Harmental with a sly expression between his knife and

fork, "So, my dear Chevalier," said he, "we conspire, it seems; and in order to succeed, we have need of poor Captain Roquefinette."

"And who told you that, Captain?" broke in the chevalier, trembling in spite of himself.

"Who told me that? *Pardieu!* it is an easy riddle to solve. A man who gives away horses worth a hundred louis, who drinks wine at a pistole the bottle, and who lodges in a garret in the Rue du Temps-Perdu, what the devil do you imagine he is doing if not conspiring?"

"Well, Captain," said D'Harmental, laughing, "I shall never be discreet; you have divined the truth. Does a conspiracy frighten you?" he continued, filling his guest's glass.

"Me? frighten me! Who says that anything on earth can frighten Captain Roquefinette?"

"Not I, Captain; for at the first glance, at the first word, I fixed on you as my second."

"Ah, that is to say that if you are hung on a scaffold twenty feet high, I shall be hung on one ten feet high, that's all!"

"*Peste!* Captain," said D'Harmental, refilling his glass, "if one always began by seeing things in their worst light, one never would attempt anything."

"Because I have spoken of the gallows?" answered the captain. "That proves nothing. What is the gallows in the eyes of a philosopher? One of the thousand ways of parting from life, and certainly one of the least disagreeable. One can see that you never have looked the thing in the face, since you have such an aversion to it. Besides, on proving our noble descent, we shall have our heads cut off, like Monsieur de Rohan. Did you see Monsieur de Rohan's head cut off?" continued the captain, looking at D'Harmental. "He was a handsome young man, like you, and of about your age. He con-

spired, as you propose doing, but the conspiracy was a failure. That is always possible, for any one may be deceived. They built him a beautiful black scaffold; they allowed him to turn toward the window where his mistress was; they cut the neck of his shirt with scissors. But the executioner was a bungler, accustomed to hang and not to decapitate, so that he was obliged to strike three or four times to cut the head off, and after all, was obliged to use a knife which he drew from his girdle, and with which he chopped so well that he at last succeeded. Come, you are a brave man," continued the captain, seeing that the chevalier had listened without frowning to the details of that horrible execution. "Enough! I am your man. Against whom are we conspiring? Let us see. Is it against Monsieur le Duc du Maine? Is it against Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans? Must we break the lame one's other leg? Must we cut out the blind one's other eye? I am ready."

"Nothing of all that, Captain; and if it pleases God, there will be no blood spilled."

"What is going on, then?"

"Have you ever heard of the abduction of the Duke of Mantua's secretary?"

"Of Matthioli?"

"Yes."

"*Pardieu!* I know the affair better than any one, for I saw them pass as they were conducting him to Pignerol. It was the Chevalier de Saint-Martin and Monsieur de Villebois who did it; and by this token, they each had three thousand francs for themselves and their men."

"That was only middling pay," said D'Harmental, with a disdainful air.

"You think so, Chevalier? Nevertheless, three thousand francs is a nice little sum."

"Then for three thousand francs you would have undertaken it?"

"I would have undertaken it," answered the captain.

"But if instead of carrying off a secretary, it had been proposed to you to carry off a duke?"

"That would have been dearer."

"But you would have undertaken it all the same?"

"Why not? I should have asked double, that is all."

"And if while giving you double pay, a man like myself had said to you, 'Captain, it is not an obscure danger that I plunge you into; it is a struggle in which I am myself engaged, like you, and in which I venture my name, my future, and my head,' what would you have answered?"

"I would have given him my hand, as I now give it you. Now what is the business?"

The chevalier filled his own glass and that of the captain.

"To the health of the regent," said he, "and may he arrive without accident at the Spanish frontier, as Matthioli arrived at Pignerol!"

"Ah, ah!" said the captain, raising his glass. Then, after a pause, "And why not?" he continued; "the regent is but a man, after all. Only we shall neither be hung nor decapitated; we shall be broken on the wheel. To any one else I should say that a regent would be dearer; but to you, Chevalier, I have only one price. Give me six thousand francs, and I will find a dozen determined men."

"But those twelve men, — do you think that you may trust them?"

"What need for their knowing what they are doing? They will think they are only carrying out a wager."

"And I, Captain," said D'Harmental, opening a desk

and taking from it a bag containing a thousand pistoles, "will show you that I do not haggle with my friends. Here are two thousand francs in gold. Take them on account if we succeed, if we fail, we will cry quits."

"Chevalier," answered the captain, taking the bag of money and poising it on his hand with an indescribable air of satisfaction, "I will not do you the injustice of counting after you. When is the affair to be?"

"I do not know yet, Captain; but if you find the *pâté* to your taste, and the wine good, and if you will do me the pleasure of breakfasting with me every day as you have done to-day, I will keep you informed of everything."

"That would not do, Chevalier," said the captain. "I should not have come to you three mornings before the police of that cursed D'Argenson would be on our tracks. Luckily, he has to deal with some one as clever as himself, and I am used to playing hide-and-seek with him. No, no, Chevalier, from now till the moment for action, the less we see of each other the better; or rather, we must not see each other at all. Your street is not a long one, and as it opens at one end on the Rue du Gros-Chenet, and at the other on the Rue Montmartre, I shall have no reason for coming through it. Here," he continued, detaching his shoulder-knot, "take this ribbon. The day that you want me, tie it to a nail outside your window. I shall understand what that means, and will climb your stairs."

"What, Captain!" said D'Harmental, seeing that his companion had risen and was fastening on his sword. "Are you going without finishing the bottle? What has the wine, which you appeared to appreciate so much a little while ago, done to you, that you despise it so now?"

"It is just because I appreciate it still that I tear

myself away from it; and the proof that I do not despise it," said the captain, filling his glass, "is that I am going to say to it a last adieu. To your health, Chevalier! you may boast of having good wine. Hum! And now, n-o, no, that is all. I shall take to water till I see the ribbon flutter from your window. Try to let it be as soon as possible, for water is a liquid that plays the devil with my constitution."

"But why do you go so soon?"

"Because I know Captain Roquefinette. He is a good fellow; but when he sits down before a bottle he must drink, and when he has drunk he must talk; and however well one talks, remember that those who talk much always finish by making some blunder. Adieu, Chevalier. Do not forget the crimson ribbon; I go to look after our business."

"Adieu, Captain," said D'Harmental; "I am pleased to see that I have no need to preach discretion to you."

The captain made the sign of the cross on his mouth with his right thumb, placed his hat straight on his head, raised his sword for fear of its making a noise in striking against the wall, and went downstairs as silently as if he had feared that every step would echo in the Hôtel d'Argenson.

CHAPTER XII.

SEE-SAW.

THE chevalier remained alone; but in the conversation which he had had with the captain he found so much matter for reflection that it was unnecessary for him to have recourse either to the poetry of the Abbé de Chaulieu, his harpsichord, or his crayons. Indeed, until now he had been only half engaged in the hazardous enterprise of which the Duchesse du Maine and the Prince de Cellamare had predicted to him the happy ending, and of which the captain, in order to try his courage, had so brutally exhibited to him the bloody termination that might ensue. As yet he had only been the end of a chain, and on breaking away from one side, he would have been loose. Now he had become an intermediate link, fastened at both ends, and attached at the same time to the highest and the lowest extremes of society. In a word, from this hour he no longer belonged to himself; he was like the Alpine traveller, who, having lost his way, stops in the middle of an unknown road, and measures with his eye, for the first time, the mountain which rises above him and the gulf which yawns beneath his feet.

Happily, the chevalier had the calm, cold, and resolute courage of a man in whom blood and bile, — those two opposite forces, — instead of neutralizing, stimulated each other. He engaged in a perilous enterprise with all the impetuosity of the sanguine temperament; and once engaged in that enterprise, he faced its peril with the quiet

resolution of the bilious temperament. And therefore the chevalier was likely to be as dangerous in a conspiracy as in a duel; for as his calmness enabled him in a duel to take advantage of the slightest error on the part of his adversary, so in a conspiracy it would enable him to reunite, as often as they were broken, those imperceptible threads on which the success of great enterprises depends. Madame du Maine had good reason for saying to Mademoiselle de Launay that she might put out her lantern, and that she believed she had at last found a man.

But this man was young, twenty-six years of age, with a heart open to all the illusions and all the poetry of that early period of life. As a child he had laid down his playthings at the feet of his mother. As a young man he had come to exhibit his handsome uniform as colonel to the eyes of his mistress. Indeed, in every enterprise of his life some loved image had gone before him, and he had thrown himself into danger with the certainty that if he should perish, there would be some one surviving who would mourn his fate.

But his mother was dead; the last woman by whom he had believed himself loved had betrayed him; and he felt that he was alone in the world, bound solely by interest to men to whom he would become an obstacle as soon as he ceased to be an instrument, and who, if he should fall, far from mourning his loss, would only see in it a cause of satisfaction. Now, this isolated position, which ought to be desired by all men in a great danger, is almost always (such is the egotism of our nature) a cause of profound discouragement. Such is the horror of nothingness in man that he believes he still survives in the sentiments which he has inspired, and he in some measure consoles himself for leaving the world by thinking of the regrets

which will accompany his memory, and of the devotion which will visit his tomb. Thus, at this crisis, the chevalier would have given everything to be loved, if it was only by a dog.

He was plunged in the saddest of these reflections when, passing and repassing before his window, he noticed that his neighbor's was open. He stopped suddenly and shook his head, as if to cast off the most sombre of his thoughts; then leaning his elbow on the table, and his head on his hand, he tried to give a different direction to his thoughts by looking at exterior objects. But man is no more the master of his waking thoughts than he is of those that come to him in sleep; and the dreams that visit him, whether his eyes are open or closed, follow a development that is independent of his will, and attach themselves, beneath his consciousness, to invisible threads, which, vibrating at length in an unexpected manner, reveal their existence. Then objects the most incongruous come into relation, and thoughts the most incoherent fall into place; and one is visited by fugitive gleams, which if they were not instantly extinguished would perhaps disclose future events. One perceives then that there is something wonderful in him, and comprehends that he is only a machine moved by invisible hands; and according as he is a fatalist or a believer in Providence, he bends beneath the unintelligent caprice of Chance, or bows before the mysterious will of God.

Thus it was with D'Harmental. He had sought, by looking at objects foreign to his remembrances and his hopes, some distraction from his present situation; and he found only a sequel to his thoughts.

The young girl whom he had seen in the morning was seated near her window, in order to take advantage of the last rays of daylight; she was working at some kind of

embroidery. Behind her the harpsichord was open, and on a stool at her feet her greyhound slept the light sleep of an animal destined by nature to be the guard of man, waking at every noise which arose from the street, raising its ears, and stretching out its elegant head over the window-sill; then it lay down again, placing one of its little paws upon its mistress's knees. All this was deliciously lighted up by the rays of the sinking sun, which penetrated into the room, sparkling on the steel ornaments of the harpsichord and the gold beading of the picture-frames. The rest was in twilight.

Then it seemed to the chevalier — perhaps because of the mood he was in when this picture caught his eye — that this young girl with the calm and sweet face came into his life like one of those personages who remain behind the scenes until a given moment arrives, and then in the second or third act make their entry to take part in the action, and sometimes to change the *dénouement*.

Since he had been of the age when one sees angels in one's dreams, he had seen no one like her. She was a combination of beauty, candor, and simplicity, such as may be seen sometimes in those charming heads which Greuze has copied, not from nature, but from the reflections in the mirror of his imagination. Then forgetting everything, — the humble condition in which without doubt she had been born, the street where he had found her, the modest room which she had inhabited, — seeing nothing in the woman except the woman herself, he attributed to her a heart corresponding with her face, and thought what would be the happiness of the man who should first cause that heart to beat, who should be looked upon with love by those beautiful eyes, and who in a first kiss should gather from those lips, so fresh and so pure, that flower of the soul, — the confession, "I love you."

Such are the different aspects which the same objects borrow from the situation of him who looks at them. A week before, in the midst of his gayety, in his life which no danger menaced, between a breakfast at the tavern and a stag-hunt, between a wager at tennis and a supper at La Fillon's, if D'Harmental had met this young girl he would doubtless have seen in her nothing but a charming grisette, whom he would have had followed by his *valet de chambre*, and to whom the next day he would have outrageously offered a present of some twenty-five louis.

But the D'Harmental of a week ago existed no more. In the place of the handsome seigneur — elegant, wild, dissipated, and certain of life — was an isolated young man, walking in the shade, alone, and self-reliant, without a star to guide him, who might suddenly feel the earth open under his feet, or the heavens burst above his head. He had need of a support, so feeble was he; he had need of love; he had need of poetry. It was not then wonderful that searching for a Madonna to whom to address his prayers, he raised in his imagination this young and beautiful girl from the material and prosaic sphere in which he found her, and that drawing her into his own he placed her — not such as she was, doubtless, but such as he wished her to be — on the empty pedestal of his past adorations.

All at once the young girl raised her head, and happening to look in his direction saw the pensive figure of the chevalier through the glass. It appeared evident to her that the young man remained there on her account, and that it was at her he was looking. Then a bright blush spread over her face. However, she pretended she had seen nothing, and bent her head once more over her embroidery. But a minute afterward she rose, moved

carelessly about the room, and then without ostentation or appearance of false prudery, but nevertheless with a certain embarrassment, she returned and shut the window. D'Harmental remained where he was and as he was, continuing, in spite of the shutting of the window, to advance into the imaginary country where his thoughts were straying.

Once or twice he thought that he saw the curtain of his neighbor's window raised, as if she wished to know whether he whose indiscretion had driven her from her place was still at his. At last a few masterly chords were heard; a sweet harmony followed; and then D'Harmental opened his window in his turn.

He had not been mistaken; his neighbor was an admirable musician. She executed two or three little pieces, but without blending her voice with the sound of the instrument; and D'Harmental found almost as much pleasure in listening to her as he had found in looking at her. Suddenly she stopped in the midst of a passage. D'Harmental supposed either that she had seen him at his window, and wished to punish him for his curiosity, or that some one had come in and interrupted her. He stepped back, but placed himself so as not to lose sight of the window, and soon discovered that his last supposition was the true one.

A man came to the window, raised the curtain, and pressed his fat, good-natured face against the glass, while with one hand he beat a march against the panes. The chevalier recognized, in spite of a noticeable difference in his toilet, the man of the water-jet whom he had seen on the terrace in the morning, and who had twice pronounced so familiarly the name of "Bathilde."

This figure, more than prosaic, produced the effect which naturally might have been expected; that is to

say, it brought D'Harmental back from imaginary to real life. He had forgotten this man, who made such a strange and complete contrast with the young girl, and who of course must be her father, her lover, or her husband. But in either of these cases, what could there be in common between the daughter, the wife, or the mistress of such a man, and the noble and aristocratic chevalier? A woman — and it is a misfortune springing from her dependent situation — rises or falls according to the grandeur or vulgarity of him on whose arm she leans; and it must be confessed that the gardener was not formed to maintain poor Bathilde at the height to which the chevalier had raised her in his dreams.

Then he began to laugh at his own folly; and the night having arrived, inasmuch as he had not been outside the door since the day before, he determined to take a walk through the town, in order to assure himself of the truth of the Prince de Cellamare's reports. He wrapped himself in his cloak, descended the four stories, and bent his steps toward the Luxembourg, whither, according to the note which the Abbé Brigaud had brought him in the morning, the regent was going that evening, without guards, to take supper with his daughter.

Arrived opposite the palace of the Luxembourg, the chevalier saw none of those signs which should announce that the Duc d'Orléans was at his daughter's house. There was only one sentinel at the door, whereas, from the moment that the regent entered, a second was generally placed there. Besides, he saw no carriage waiting in the court, no footmen nor outriders; it was evident, then, that Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans had not yet come. The chevalier waited to see him pass, for as the regent never breakfasted, and took nothing but a cup of chocolate at two o'clock in the afternoon, he rarely supped later

than six o'clock; and a quarter to six had struck at the St. Sulpice at the moment when the chevalier turned the corner of the Rue de Condé and the Rue de Vaugirard.

The chevalier waited an hour and a half in the Rue de Tournon, going from the Rue du Petit-Lion to the palace, without seeing what he had come to look for. At a quarter to eight he saw signs of activity at the Luxembourg. A carriage, with outriders armed with torches, came to the foot of the steps. A minute later three women got in, and he heard the coachman call to the outriders, "To the Palais Royal!" The outriders set off at a gallop, the carriage followed, the sentinel presented arms; and though the elegant equipage with the royal arms of France passed him quickly, the chevalier recognized the Duchesse de Berri, Madame de Mouchy, her lady of honor, and Madame de Pons, her tire-woman.

There had been an important error in the report sent to the chevalier; it was the daughter who went to the father, not the father who went to the daughter.

Nevertheless, the chevalier still waited, for some accident might have happened to the regent, which had detained him at home. An hour after, he saw the carriage return. The Duchesse de Berri was laughing at a story which Broglie was telling her. Then there had not been any serious accident. The police of the Prince de Cellamare had made a mistake.

The chevalier returned home about ten o'clock without having been recognized. He had some trouble to get the door opened, for according to the patriarchal habits of Madame Denis's house, the porter had gone to bed. He came out grumbling to unfasten the bolts. D'Harmental slipped a crown into his hand, saying to him, once for all, that he should sometimes return late, but that every time he did so he would give him the same gratuity; upon

which the porter thanked him, and assured him that he was perfectly welcome to come home at any time he liked, or even not to return at all.

On returning to his room, D'Harmental saw that his neighbor's was lighted up; he placed his candle behind a piece of furniture, and approached the window, so that as much as the muslin curtains allowed, he could see into her room, while she could not see into his.

She was seated near a table, drawing probably on a card which she held on her knees, for he saw her profile standing out black against the light behind her. Shortly another shadow, which the chevalier recognized as that of the good man of the terrace, passed twice between the light and the window. At last the shade approached the young girl; she offered her forehead; the shadow imprinted a kiss on it, and went away with his candle in his hand. Directly afterward the windows of the fifth story were lighted up. All these little circumstances spoke a language which it was impossible not to understand. The man of the terrace was not the husband of Bathilde; he must be her father.

D'Harmental, without knowing why, felt overjoyed at this discovery; he opened his window as softly as he could, and leaned on the bar, which served him as a support, with his eyes fixed on the shadow. He fell into the same revery out of which he had been startled that morning by the grotesque appearance of the gardener. In about an hour the girl rose, put down her card and crayons on the table, advanced toward the alcove, knelt on a chair before the second window, and offered up her prayers. D'Harmental understood that her laborious task was finished; but remembering the curiosity of his beautiful neighbor when he had begun to play the first time, he wished to see if he could delay her retiring, and he

sat down to his spinet. What he had foreseen happened; at the first notes which reached her, the young girl, not knowing that owing to the position of the light he could see her shadow through the curtains, approached the window on tiptoe, and thinking herself hidden, she listened to the melodious instrument, which, like the nightingale, awoke to sing in the middle of the night.

The concert would have probably continued thus for some hours, for D'Harmental, encouraged by the result produced, was conscious of an energy and an ease of execution such as he never had known before. Unluckily, the occupier of the third floor was some clown not fond of music; and D'Harmental heard suddenly, just beneath his feet, the noise of a stick knocking on the ceiling with such violence that he could not doubt that it was a request to him to put off his melodious occupation till a more suitable period. Under other circumstances, D'Harmental would have sent the impertinent marplot to the devil; but he reflected that any ill-feeling on the lodger's part would injure his own reputation with Madame Denis, and that he was playing too heavy a game to risk being recognized through unwillingness to submit philosophically to all the inconveniences of the new position which he had adopted. He therefore, instead of setting himself in opposition to the rules established without doubt between Madame Denis and her lodgers, yielded to the request, and forgot in what manner it had been conveyed to him.

On her part, as soon as she heard nothing more, the young girl left the window; and as she let the inner curtains fall behind her, she disappeared from D'Harmental's eyes. For some time longer he could still see a light in her room; then the light was extinguished. The window on the fifth floor had been dark for two hours. D'Har-

mental also went to bed, happy in the thought that there existed a point of sympathy between himself and his neighbor.

The next day the Abbé Brigaud entered the room with his accustomed punctuality. The chevalier had already been up more than an hour; he had gone twenty times to his window, but without seeing his neighbor, although it was evident that she was up, even before himself; indeed, on waking, he had seen that the large curtains were put up in their bands. Thus he was disposed to let out his ill-humor on any one.

"Ah, *pardieu!* my dear Abbé," said he, as soon as the door was shut, "congratulate the prince for me on his police service; it is admirably performed, on my honor."

"What have you to say against it?" asked the abbé, with the half-smile which was habitual to him.

"What have I to say? I have this: that last evening, wishing to judge for myself of its reliability, I went and hid myself in the Rue Tournon; that I remained there four hours, and that it was not the regent who went to his daughter, but Madame de Berri who went to her father."

"Well, we know that."

"Ah, you know that!" said D'Harmental.

"Yes, and by this token, that she left the Luxembourg at five minutes to eight, with Madame de Mouchy and Madame de Pons, and that she returned at half-past nine, bringing Broglie with her, who came to take the regent's place at table."

"And where was the regent?"

"The regent?"

"Yes."

"That is another story; you shall learn. Listen, and not lose a word; then we shall see if you will say that the prince's police service is badly performed."

"I attend."

"Our report announced that at three o'clock the duke-regent would go to play tennis in the Rue de Seine."

"Yes."

"He went. In about half an hour he went away, holding his handkerchief over his eyes. He had hit himself on the brow with the racket, and with such violence that he had torn the skin of his forehead."

"Ah, this, then, was the accident!"

"Listen. Then the regent, instead of returning to the Palais Royal, was driven to the house of Madame de Sabran. You know where Madame de Sabran lives?"

"She lived in the Rue de Tournon; but since her husband has become *maître d'hôtel* to the regent, she lives in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, near the Palais Royal."

"Exactly; but it seems that Madame de Sabran, who until now was faithful to Richelieu, was touched by the pitiable state in which she saw the prince, and wished to justify the proverb, 'Unlucky at play, lucky at love.' The prince, by a little note, dated half-past seven, from the drawing-room of Madame de Sabran, with whom he supped, announced to Broglie that he should not go to the Luxembourg, and charged him to go in his stead, and make his excuses to the Duchesse de Berri."

"Ah, this, then, was the story which Broglie was telling, and at which the ladies were laughing."

"It is probable; now do you understand?"

"Yes; I understand that the regent is not possessed of ubiquity, and could not be at the house of Madame de Sabran and at his daughter's at the same time."

"And you understand only that?"

"My dear Abbé, you speak like an oracle; explain yourself."

"This evening, at eight o'clock, I will come for you;

we will go to the Rue des Bons-Enfans together. The localities will speak for me."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Harmental, "I see; so near the Palais Royal, he will go on foot. The hotel which Madame de Sabran inhabits has an entrance from the Rue des Bons-Enfans. After a certain hour they shut the passage from the Palais Royal which opens on the Rue des Bons-Enfans; and he will be obliged, on his return, to follow either the Cour des Fontaines, or the Rue Neuve-des-Bons-Enfans, and then we shall have him! *Mordieu!* Abbé, you are a great man, and if Monsieur du Maine does not make you cardinal, or at least archbishop, there is no longer any justice."

"I count confidently on that. Now, you understand, it is time to make ready."

"I am ready."

"Have you the means of execution prepared?"

"I have."

"Then you can correspond with your men?"

"By a sign."

"And that sign cannot betray you?"

"Impossible."

"Then all goes well, and we may have breakfast; for I was in such haste to tell you the good news that I came out fasting."

"Breakfast, my dear Abbé! you speak coolly; I have nothing to offer you except the remains of yesterday's *pâté* and two or three bottles of wine, which I believe survived the battle."

"Hum, hum," murmured the abbé; "we will do better than that, my dear Chevalier."

"I am at your orders."

"Let us go down and breakfast with our good hostess, Madame Denis."

"And why do you want me to breakfast with her? Do I know her?"

"That concerns me; I shall present you as my pupil."

"But we shall get a detestable breakfast."

"Comfort yourself; I know her table."

"But this breakfast will be tiresome."

"But you will make a friend of a woman well known in the neighborhood for her good conduct, for her devotion to the Government, — a woman incapable of harboring a conspirator. Do you understand that?"

"If it be for the good of the cause, Abbé, I sacrifice myself."

"Moreover, it is a very agreeable house, where there are two young people who play, one on the spinet, and the other on the guitar, and a young man who is an attorney's clerk, — a house where you may go down on Sunday evenings to play loto."

"Go to the devil with your Madame Denis! Ah, pardon, Abbé! perhaps you are her friend. In that case, imagine that I have said nothing."

"I am her confessor," replied the Abbé Brigaud, with a modest air.

"Then a thousand excuses, my dear Abbé; but you are right indeed. Madame Denis is still a beautiful woman, perfectly well preserved, with superb hands and very pretty feet. *Peste!* I remember that. Go down first; I will follow."

"Why not together?"

"But my toilet, Abbé. Would you have me appear before the Demoiselles Denis with my hair in its present state? Devil take it! one owes something to his appearance. Besides, it is better that you should announce me I have not a confessor's privilege."

"You are right. I will go down and announce you, and in ten minutes you will arrive; will you not?"

"In ten minutes."

"Adieu!"

"Au revoir!"

The chevalier had told only half the truth. He remained partly to dress, perhaps, but also in the hope of seeing his beautiful neighbor, of whom he had dreamed all the night; but his hope was disappointed. He hid himself behind the curtains of his window; those of the young girl with the fair hair and the beautiful black eyes remained closed. It is true that by way of compensation he could perceive the horticulturist, who, opening his door, passed out, with the same precaution as the day before, first his hand, then his head; but this time his boldness went no further, for there was a slight fog, and fog is essentially contrary to the organization of the Parisian bourgeois. Therefore our bourgeois coughed twice, and then, drawing in his head and his arm, reentered his room like a tortoise withdrawing into his shell. D'Harmental saw with pleasure that he might dispense with a barometer, and that this neighbor would render him the same service as those excellent wooden monks who come out from their hermitage in fair weather, and remain obstinately housed on the days when it rains.

The apparition had its ordinary effect, and reacted on poor Bathilde. Every time that D'Harmental perceived the young girl, there was in her such a sweet attraction that he saw nothing but the woman, — young, beautiful, and graceful, a musician and painter; that is to say, the most pleasing and most complete creature he ever had met. But when, in his turn, the man of the terrace presented himself to the chevalier's gaze, — with his common face,

his insignificant figure, and that indelible appearance of vulgarity which attaches to certain individuals, — directly a sort of miraculous transition took place in the chevalier's mind. All the poetry disappeared, as a machinist's whistle causes the disappearance of a fairy palace. Everything was seen by a different light; and D'Harmental's native aristocracy regained the ascendency. Bathilde was then nothing but the daughter of this man; that is to say, a grisette. Her beauty, her grace, her elegance, even her talents, were but an accident, an error of Nature, like a rose flowering on a cabbage-stalk. The chevalier shrugged his shoulders as he stood before the glass, began to laugh, and to wonder at the impression which he had received. He attributed it to the preoccupation of his mind, to the strange and solitary situation, to everything, in fact, except its true cause, — the sovereign and irresistible power of distinction and beauty.

D'Harmental therefore went down to his hostess in a state of mind rendering him peculiarly susceptible to the charms of Mesdemoiselles Denis.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DENIS FAMILY.

Madame Denis did not think it proper that two young persons as innocent as her daughters should breakfast with a young man who, although he had been only three days in Paris, already came in at eleven o'clock at night, and played on the harpsichord till two in the morning. In vain the Abbé Brigaud affirmed that this double infraction of the rules of her house should in no degree lower her opinion of his pupil, for whom he could answer as for himself. All he could obtain was that the young ladies should appear at the dessert.

But the chevalier soon perceived that if their mother had ordered them not to be seen, she had not forbidden them to be heard; for scarcely were they at table, round a veritable devotee's breakfast, composed of a multitude of little dishes tempting to the eye and delicious to the palate, when the sounds of a spinet were heard, accompanying a voice which was not wanting in compass, but whose frequent errors of intonation showed lamentable inexperience. At the first notes Madame Denis placed her hand on the abbé's arm; then after an instant's silence, during which she listened with a pleased smile to that music which made the chevalier's flesh creep, "Do you hear?" she said. "It is our Athénaïs who is playing, and it is Émilie who sings."

The Abbé Brigaud, making a sign with his head that he heard perfectly, trod on D'Harmental's foot under the

table, to hint that this was an opportunity for paying a compliment.

"Madame," said the chevalier, who understood this appeal to his politeness, "we are doubly indebted to you; for you offer us not only an excellent breakfast, but a delightful concert."

"Yes," replied Madame Denis, carelessly, "it is those children. They do not know you are here, and they are practising; but I will go and tell them to stop."

Madame Denis made a movement, as if about to rise.

"What, Madame!" said D'Harmental; "because I come from the country do you believe me unworthy to make acquaintance with the talents of the capital?"

"God forbid, Monsieur, that I should have such an opinion of you," said Madame Denis, slyly, "for I know you are a musician; the lodger on the third story has told me so."

"In that case, Madame, I fear he gave you no flattering account of my skill," replied the chevalier, laughing; "for he seemed not to appreciate the little I may possess."

"He only said that it appeared to him a strange time for music. But listen, Monsieur Raoul," added Madame Denis, inclining her head toward the door; "the parts are changed. Now, my dear Abbé, it is our Athénaïs who sings, and it is Émilie who accompanies her on the guitar."

It appeared that Madame Denis had a weakness for Athénaïs; for instead of talking, as she did when Émilie was singing, she listened throughout to the romance of her favorite, her eyes tenderly fixed on the Abbé Brigaud, who, still eating and drinking, contented himself with nodding his head in sign of approbation. Athénaïs sang a little more correctly than her sister, but she offset this

merit by a defect at least equivalent, in the estimation of the chevalier, — she had a voice of surprising vulgarity.

As to Madame Denis, she beat wrong time with her head, with an air of beatitude which did infinitely more honor to her maternal pride than to her musical intelligence.

A duet succeeded to the solos. The young ladies appeared determined to give their whole *répertoire*. D'Harmental, in his turn, sought under the table for the abbé's feet, to crush at least one of them; but he only found those of Madame Denis, who, taking this for a personal attention, turned graciously toward him.

"So then, Monsieur Raoul," she said, "you come, young and inexperienced, to brave all the dangers of the capital?"

"Yes," said the Abbé Brigaud, taking upon himself to answer, for fear that D'Harmental might not be able to resist answering by some joke. "You see in this young man, Madame Denis, the son of a friend who was very dear to me" (the abbé put his napkin to his eyes), "and I hope that he will do credit to the care I have bestowed on his education; for though he may not appear so, my pupil is ambitious."

"And Monsieur is right," replied Madame Denis; "for with his talents and appearance, there is no saying to what he may attain."

"Ah, but, Madame Denis," said the Abbé Brigaud, "if you spoil him thus, I shall not bring him to you again. My dear Raoul," continued the abbé, addressing him in a paternal manner, "I hope you will not believe a word of all this." Then, whispering to Madame Denis, "Such as you see him, he might have remained at Sauvigny, and taken the first place after the squire. He has three thousand francs a year in the funds."

"That is exactly what I intend giving to each of my daughters," replied Madame Denis, raising her voice so as to be heard by the chevalier, and giving a side-glance to discover what effect the announcement of such munificence would have upon him.

Unfortunately for the future establishment of Mesdemoiselles Denis, the chevalier was at that moment thinking of quite another matter than of uniting the three thousand francs which this generous mother gave to her daughters to the thousand crowns a year which the Abbé Brigaud had bestowed on him. The shrill treble of Mademoiselle Émilie, the contralto of Mademoiselle Athénaïs, and the wretched accompaniment of both had recalled to his recollection the pure and flexible voice and the distinguished execution of his neighbor. And consequently, thanks to that singular power which a great preoccupation gives us against exterior objects, the chevalier had been oblivious to the discordant sounds proceeding from the adjoining room, and taking refuge in himself, was following a sweet melody which floated in his memory, and which protected him, like an enchanted armor, from the sharp sounds which were flying around him.

"How he listens!" said Madame Denis to Brigaud. "'T is worth while taking trouble for a young man like that. I shall have a bone to pick with Monsieur Frémond."

"Who is Monsieur Frémond?" said the abbé, pouring himself out something to drink.

"He is the lodger on the third floor. A contemptible little fellow with twelve hundred francs a year, whose temper has caused me to have quarrels with every one in the house, and who came to complain that Monsieur Raoul prevented him and his dog from sleeping."

"My dear Madame Denis," replied the abbé, "you must not quarrel with Monsieur Frémond for that. Two

o'clock in the morning is an unreasonable time; and if my pupil must sit up till then, he must play in the daytime and draw in the evening."

"What! Monsieur Raoul draws also?" cried Madame Denis, quite astonished at so much talent.

"Draws like Mignard."

"Oh, my dear Abbé," said Madame Denis, clasping her hands, "if we could but obtain one thing."

"What?" asked the abbé.

"That he would take the portrait of our Athénaïs!"

The chevalier awoke suddenly from his revery, like a traveller who, asleep on the grass, becomes aware that a serpent is near, and instinctively understands that a great danger threatens him.

"Abbé!" he cried with a frightened air, and glaring furiously at poor Brigaud, "Abbé, no foolishness!"

"Oh, what is the matter with your pupil?" asked Madame Denis, quite alarmed.

Happily, at the moment when the abbé, uncertain how to answer Madame Denis's question, was seeking a subterfuge, the door opened, and the two young ladies entered blushing; and stepping from right to left, each made a reverence as in a minuet.

"Well!" said Madame Denis, affecting an air of severity, "what is this? Who gave you permission to leave your room?"

"Mamma," replied a voice which the chevalier recognized by its shrill tones as that of Mademoiselle Émilie, "we beg pardon if we have done wrong, and are willing to return."

"But, Mamma," said another voice, which the chevalier concluded must belong to Mademoiselle Athénaïs, "we thought that it was agreed that we were to come in at dessert."

"Well, come in, since you are here; it would be ridiculous now for you to go back. Besides," added Madame Denis, seating Athénaïs between herself and Brigaud, and Émilie between herself and the chevalier, "young persons are always best — are they not, Abbé? — under their mother's wing." And Madame Denis presented to her daughters a plate of bonbons, from which they helped themselves with a modest air which did honor to their education.

The chevalier, during the discourse and action of Madame Denis, had time to examine her daughters.

Mademoiselle Émilie was tall and stiff, from twenty-two to twenty-three years old, and was said to be very much like her late father, — an advantage which did not apparently suffice to gain for her in the maternal heart an affection equal to that which Madame Denis entertained for her other two children. Thus poor Émilie, always afraid of being scolded, retained a natural awkwardness which the repeated lessons of her dancing-master had not been able to overcome.

Mademoiselle Athénaïs, on the contrary, was small, plump, and rosy, and thanks to her sixteen or seventeen years, had what is vulgarly called "the devil's beauty." She did not resemble either Monsieur or Madame Denis, — a singularity which had much exercised the evil tongues of the Rue St. Martin before Madame Denis went to occupy the house which her husband had bought in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. In spite of this absence of all likeness to her parents, Mademoiselle Athénaïs was the declared favorite of her mother, which gave her the assurance that poor Émilie wanted. Athénaïs, however, it must be said, always profited by this favor to excuse the pretended faults of her elder sister. The chevalier, who as an artist was a student of faces, thought he discovered at the first

glance, between the face of Athénaïs and that of Abbé Brigaud, certain lines of resemblance, which, joined to a singular correspondence of figure, might have guided a curious investigator to a discovery of the paternity sought, if such investigation were not wisely prohibited by our laws.

Although it was scarcely eleven o'clock in the morning, the two sisters were dressed as if for a ball, and carried all the trinkets they possessed on their necks, arms, and ears.

This sight, so conformable to the idea which D'Harmental had formed beforehand of the daughters of his landlady, gave him a new subject for reflection. Since the Demoiselles Denis were so exactly what they ought to be, — that is to say, in such complete harmony with their position and education, — why was Bathilde, who seemed hardly equal to them in rank, as visibly distinguished as they were vulgar? Whence came this immense physical and moral difference between girls of the same class and age? There must be some secret underlying that, which the chevalier would no doubt know some day or other.

A second pressure of the Abbé Brigaud's foot against that of D'Harmental made him understand that however just his reflections were, he had chosen a bad moment for abandoning himself to them. Indeed, Madame Denis assumed so significant an air of dignity that D'Harmental saw that he had not an instant to lose if he wished to efface from her mind the bad impression which his distraction had caused.

"Madame," said he, immediately, with the most gracious air he could assume, "that which I already see of your family fills me with the most lively desire to become more completely acquainted with it. Is not your son at home, and shall I not have the pleasure of being presented to him?"

"Monsieur," answered Madame Denis, to whom so amiable an address had restored all her good-humor, "my son is with Maître Joulu, his master; and unless his business brings him this way, it is improbable that he will have this morning the honor of making your acquaintance."

"*Parbleu!* my dear pupil," said the Abbé Brigaud, extending his hand toward the door, "you are like the late Aladdin. It is enough for you to express a wish, and it is fulfilled."

Indeed, at this moment they heard on the staircase the song about Marlborough, which at this time had all the charm of novelty; the door was thrown open, and gave entrance to a boy with a laughing face, who much resembled Mademoiselle Athénaïs.

"Good, good, good!" said the new-comer, crossing his arms, and remarking the ordinary number of his family increased by the abbé and the chevalier. "Not bad, Madame Denis; she sends Boniface to his office with a bit of bread and cheese, saying, 'Beware of indigestion,' and in his absence she gives receptions and breakfasts. Luckily, poor Boniface has a good nose. He comes through the Rue Montmartre; he snuffs the wind, and says, 'What is going on there at No. 5 Rue du Temps-Perdu?' So he came, and here he is. Make a place for one." And joining action to the word, Boniface drew a chair to the table, and sat down between the abbé and the chevalier.

"Monsieur Boniface," said Madame Denis, trying to assume a severe air, "do you not see that there are strangers here?"

"Strangers!" said Boniface, taking a dish on the table, and setting it before himself; "and where are these strangers? Are you one, Papa Brigaud? Are you one,

Monsieur Raoul? You are not a stranger; you are a lodger." And taking a knife and fork, he set to work in a manner to make up for lost time.

"*Pardieu!* Madame," said the chevalier, "I see with pleasure that I am further advanced than I thought I was. I did not know that I had the honor of being known to Monsieur Boniface."

"It would be odd if I did not know you," said the lawyer's clerk, with his mouth full; "you have my bedroom."

"What, Madame Denis!" said D'Harmental, "you left me in ignorance that I had the honor to succeed in my room to the heir-apparent of your family. I am no longer astonished at finding my room so gayly fitted up; I recognize the cares of a mother."

"Yes, much good may it do you; but I have one bit of advice to give you. Don't look out of the window too much."

"Why?" asked D'Harmental.

"Why? because you have a certain neighbor opposite you —"

"Mademoiselle Bathilde," said the chevalier, carried away by his first impulse.

"Ah! you know that already?" answered Boniface; "good, good, good! that will do!"

"Will you be quiet, Monsieur!" cried Madame Denis.

"Listen!" answered Boniface; "one must inform one's lodgers when one has prohibited things about one's house. You are not in a lawyer's office; you do not know that."

"The child is full of wit," said the Abbé Brigaud, in that bantering tone which made it impossible to know whether he was serious or not.

"But," answered Madame Denis, "what do you pretend

there is in common between Monsieur Raoul and Mademoiselle Bathilde?"

"What in common? Why, in a week he will be madly in love with her, or he is not a man; and it is not worth while to love a coquette."

"A coquette?" said D'Harmental.

"Yes, a coquette, — a coquette," said Boniface; "I have said it, and I do not draw back. A coquette, who flirts with the young men and lives with an old one, without counting that little brute of a Mirza, who ate up all my bonbons, and now, whenever she sees me, wants to bite my calves."

"Leave the room, Mesdemoiselles," cried Madame Denis, rising and making her daughters rise also. "Leave the room. Ears so pure as yours ought not to hear such things." And she pushed Mademoiselle Athénaïs and Mademoiselle Émilie toward the door of their room, and went out with them.

As to D'Harmental, he felt a violent desire to break Boniface's head with a wine-bottle. Nevertheless, seeing the absurdity of the situation, he made an effort and restrained himself. "But," said he, "I thought that the bourgeois whom I saw on the terrace, — for no doubt it is of him that you speak, Monsieur Boniface — "

"Of himself, the old rascal; what did you think of him?"

"That he was her father."

"Her father! not quite. Mademoiselle Bathilde has no father."

"Then at least her uncle?"

"Her uncle after the Bretagne fashion, perhaps, but in no other manner."

"Monsieur," said Madame Denis, majestically, coming out of the room to the most distant part of which she had

doubtless consigned her daughters, "I have asked you once for all not to talk improprieties before your sisters."

"Ah, yes," said Boniface, "my sisters; do you believe that at their age they cannot understand what I said, — particularly Émilie, who is twenty-three years old?"

"Émilie is as innocent as a new-born child," said Madame Denis, seating herself between Brigaud and D'Harmental.

"I should advise you not to reckon on that. I found a pretty romance for Lent in our innocent's room. I will show it to you, Père Brigaud; you are her confessor, and we shall see if you gave her permission to read her prayers from it."

"Hold your tongue, mischief-maker!" said the abbé; "do you not see how you are grieving your mother?"

Indeed, Madame Denis, suffocating with shame that such a stigma should be attached to her daughter's reputation in the presence of a young man on whom, with a mother's foresight, she had already begun to cast an eye, was nearly fainting. There is nothing in which men believe less than in women's faintings, and yet there is nothing to which they give way more easily. Whether he believed in it or not, D'Harmental was too polite not to show his hostess some attention in such circumstances. He advanced toward her with his arms extended. Madame Denis no sooner saw this support offered to her than she let herself fall, and throwing her head back, fainted in the chevalier's arms.

"Abbé," said D'Harmental, while Boniface profited by the circumstance to fill his pockets with all the bonbons left on the table, "bring a chair."

The abbé pushed forward a chair with the nonchalance of a man accustomed to such incidents, and quite unconcerned as to their consequences.

They seated Madame Denis, and D'Harmental gave her some salts to inhale, while the Abbé Brigaud tapped softly the palms of her hands. But in spite of these cares Madame Denis did not appear disposed to return to herself. Suddenly, however, when they least expected it, she started to her feet as if moved by a spring, and gave a loud cry.

D'Harmental thought that a fit of hysterics was following the fainting. He was truly frightened, there was such an accent of reality in the scream that the poor woman gave.

"It is nothing," said Boniface; "I have only emptied the water-bottle down her back. That is what brought her to; you see she did n't know how to manage her coming back to her senses. Well, what?" continued the pitiless fellow, seeing Madame Denis look angrily at him; "it is I. Do you not recognize me, Mother Denis? It is your little Boniface, who loves you so."

"Madame," said D'Harmental, much embarrassed at the situation, "I am truly distressed at what has occurred."

"Oh, Monsieur," cried Madame Denis, weeping, "I am indeed unfortunate."

"Come, come; do not cry, Mother Denis, you are already wet enough," said Boniface. "You had better go and change your linen; there is nothing so bad for the health as wet clothes."

"The child is full of sense," said Brigaud; "and I think you had better follow his advice."

"If I might join my entreaties to those of the abbé," said D'Harmental, "I should beg you, Madame, not to inconvenience yourself for us. Besides, we were about to take leave of you."

"And you, also, Abbé?" said Madame Denis, with a distressed look at Brigaud.

"As for me," said Brigaud, who did not seem to fancy the part of comforter, "I am expected at the Hôtel Colbert, and I must leave you."

"Adieu, then," said Madame Denis, making a reverence, the dignity of which was somewhat impaired by the water trickling down her back.

"Adieu, Mother," said Boniface, throwing his arms round her neck with the assurance of a spoiled child. "Have you nothing to say to Maître Joulu?"

"Adieu, you rogue," replied the poor woman, embracing her son, — half smiling already, and still half angry, but yielding to that attraction which a mother cannot resist, — "adieu, and be steady."

"As an image, Mother Denis, but on condition that you will give us a nice little dish of sweets for dinner." And the third clerk of Maître Joulu went out, dancing, to join the Abbé Brigaud and D'Harmental, who were already on the landing.

"Well, well," said the abbé, lifting his hand quickly to his waistcoat pocket, "what are you doing there?"

"Don't worry, Papa Brigaud; I am only trying to discover whether there is not a crown in your pocket for your friend Boniface."

"Here," said the abbé, — "here is one; and now leave us alone."

"Papa Brigaud," said Boniface, in the effusion of his gratitude, "you have the heart of a cardinal; and if the king makes you only an archbishop, on my honor you will be cheated of half your dues. Adieu, Monsieur Raoul," he continued, addressing the chevalier as familiarly as if he had known him for years. "I repeat, be careful about Mademoiselle Bathilde if you wish to keep your heart, and give some sweetmeats to Mirza if you have any regard for your legs;" and holding by

the baluster, he cleared the first flight of twelve steps at one bound, and reached the street door without having touched a stair.

Brigaud descended more quietly behind him, after appointing a meeting with the chevalier at eight o'clock in the evening.

As to D'Harmental, he went back thoughtfully to his attic.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CRIMSON RIBBON.

WHAT occupied the mind of the chevalier was neither the approaching *dénouement* of the drama in which he had chosen so important a part, nor the admirable prudence of the Abbé Brigaud in placing him in a house which he habitually visited almost daily, so that his visits, however frequent, could not excite remark. It was not the majestic diction of Madame Denis, nor the soprano of Mademoiselle Émilie, nor the contralto of Mademoiselle Athénaïs, nor the tricks of Monsieur Boniface. It was simply poor Bathilde, whom he had heard so lightly mentioned; but our reader would be mistaken if he supposed that Monsieur Boniface's brutal accusation had in the least degree altered the sentiments of the chevalier for the young girl. Its first effect had indeed been a painful impression, a sentiment of disgust; but an instant's reflection showed him that such an alliance as that imputed to her was impossible.

Chance may give a charming daughter to an undistinguished father; necessity may unite a young and elegant woman to an old and vulgar husband; but a *liaison*, such as that attributed to the young girl and the bourgeois of the terrace, can result only from love or interest. Now between these two, so different in all respects, there could be no love; and as to interest, the thing was still less probable, for if they were not in absolute poverty, their situation was certainly not above mediocrity, — not that

gilded mediocrity of which Horace speaks, with a country house at Tibur or at Montmorency, and which enjoys a pension of thirty thousand sestercia from the Augustan treasury, or a government annuity of six thousand francs, but that poor and miserable mediocrity in which provision is made only from hand to mouth, and which is prevented from becoming real poverty only by incessant labor night and day.

The only conclusion D'Harmental could derive from these reflections was the certainty that Bathilde was neither the daughter, wife, nor mistress of this terrible neighbor, the sight of whom had sufficed to produce such a strange reaction on the growing love of the chevalier. And therefore, if she stood to him in no one of these three relations, there must be some mystery about her birth; and if so, Bathilde was not what she appeared to be. This supposition would explain everything. That aristocratic beauty, that charming grace, and that accomplished education were no longer an enigma without a key. Bathilde was above the position which she was temporarily forced to occupy; there had been in the destiny of this young girl one of those overthrows of fortune which are for individuals what earthquakes are for towns, and she had been forced to descend to the inferior sphere in which he found her. She was like those fallen angels who are compelled for a certain time to live among men, while awaiting the day when God will restore to them the wings on which they will mount to heaven.

The result of all this was that the chevalier, without loss of self-respect, might allow himself to love Bathilde. When a man's heart is at war with his pride, it seldom wants excuses to defeat its haughty enemy. Bathilde had now neither name nor family, and nothing prevented the imagination of the man who loved her from raising

her to a height of which she would not have dared to dream.

Consequently, far from following the advice which Monsieur Boniface had so kindly given him, the first thing D'Harmental did on returning to his room was to go to his window and inspect that of his neighbor. It was wide open. If a week before any one had told the chevalier that such a simple thing as an open window would have made his heart beat, he would have laughed at the idea. However, so it was. And after drawing a long breath, he settled himself in a corner, to watch at his ease the young girl in the opposite room, without being seen by her; for he was afraid of frightening her by an attention which she could attribute only to curiosity.

Very soon, however, D'Harmental perceived that the room was unoccupied; for the active and industrious young girl would certainly have passed many times before his eyes if she had not been absent. He therefore opened his window, and at the noise he made in doing so, he saw the elegant head of the greyhound, which, with her ears always on the watch, well worthy of the trust that her mistress had reposed in her in making her guardian of the house, was awake, and looking to see who it was that thus disturbed her sleep.

Thanks to the indiscreet counter-tenor of the good man of the terrace, and the malice of Monsieur Boniface, the chevalier already knew two things very important to know; namely, that his neighbor was called Bathilde, — a sweet and euphonious appellation, suitable to a young, beautiful, and graceful girl, — and that the greyhound was called Mirza, a name which seemed to indicate a no less distinguished rank in the canine aristocracy. Now, as nothing is to be disdained when we wish to con-

quer a fortress, and the smallest intelligence from within is often more efficacious than the most terrible machines of war, D'Harmental resolved to begin by opening communications with the greyhound; and with the most caressing tone he could give to his voice, he called, "Mirza!" Mirza, who was indolently lying on the cushion, raised her head quickly, with an unmistakable expression of astonishment. Indeed, it must have appeared strange to the intelligent little animal that a man so unknown to her as the chevalier should address her by her Christian name. She contented herself with fixing on him her uneasy eyes, — which, in the half-light where she was placed, sparkled like two carbuncles, — and uttering a little dull sound which might pass for a growl.

D'Harmental remembered that the Marquis d'Uxelles had tamed the spaniel of Mademoiselle Choin, which was a much more peevish beast than any greyhound in the world, with roast rabbit's heads; and that he had received for this delicate attention the bâton of Maréchal de France. He did not despair of being able to soften by the same kind of attention the surly reception which Mademoiselle Mirza had given to his advances, and he directed his steps toward the sugar-basin; then he returned to the window, armed with two pieces of sugar, large enough to be divided *ad infinitum*.

The chevalier was not mistaken. When the first piece of sugar fell near her, Mirza advanced her head indifferently; then, being by the aid of smell made aware of the nature of the temptation offered to her, she extended her paw toward it, drew it toward her, took it in her teeth, and began to eat it with that languid air peculiar to the race to which she belonged. This operation finished, she passed over her lips a little red tongue, which showed

that in spite of her apparent indifference, which was owing, no doubt, to her excellent education, she was not insensible to the surprise her neighbor had contrived for her. Instead of lying down again on the cushion, she remained seated, yawning languidly, but wagging her tail, to show that she would wake entirely after two or three such little attentions as had just been paid to her.

D'Harmental, who was well acquainted with the habits of the pet dogs belonging to the pretty women of the day, understood the amiable intentions of Mirza, and not wishing to give her time to change her mind, threw a second piece of sugar, taking care this time that it should fall at such a distance as to oblige her to leave her cushion to get it. This test would decide whether she was most inclined to laziness or greediness. Mirza remained an instant uncertain; then greediness carried the day, and she went across the room to get the piece of sugar, which had rolled under the harpsichord. At this moment a third piece fell near the window, and Mirza, still obedient to the laws of attraction, proceeded from the second to the third, as she had proceeded from the first to the second. But there the liberality of the chevalier stopped; he thought that he had now given enough to entitle him to expect some return, and he contented himself with calling Mirza in a more imperative tone than before, and showing her the other pieces of sugar which he held in his hand.

Mirza this time, instead of looking at the chevalier with uneasiness or disdain, rested her paws on the window-sill, and began to behave as she would to an old acquaintance. It was finished; Mirza was tamed.

The chevalier now in his turn began to treat Mirza with disdain, and to speak to her, in order to accustom her to his voice. Meanwhile, fearing a return of pride on

the part of his interlocutor, who sustained her part in the dialogue by little whines and subdued barking, he threw her a fourth piece of sugar, which she seized with greater avidity for having been kept waiting. This time, without being called, she came back to her place at the window. The chevalier's triumph was complete, — so complete that Mirza, who the day before had given signs of so superior an intelligence in discovering Bathilde's return, and in running to the door as she ascended the staircase, this time discovered neither the one nor the other, so that her mistress, entering suddenly, surprised her in the midst of these coquetries with her neighbor. It is but just to say, however, that at the noise the door made in opening, Mirza turned, and recognizing Bathilde, bounded toward her, and lavished on her the most tender caresses; but we must add, to the shame of the species, that this duty once accomplished, she hastened back to the window. This unusual action on the part of the dog naturally guided Bathilde's eyes toward the cause which occasioned it. Her eyes met those of the chevalier. Bathilde blushed; the chevalier bowed; and Bathilde, without knowing what she was doing, returned the salute.

The young girl's first impulse was to go and close the window, but an instinctive feeling restrained her. She understood that this would be giving importance to a thing which had none, and that to put herself on the defensive would be an avowal that she thought herself attacked. She therefore crossed the room without affectation, and disappeared in that part of her chamber which her neighbor's glance could not reach. Then, at the end of a few minutes, when she ventured to return, she found that he had closed his window. Bathilde understood that there was discretion in this action, and she appreciated it.

Indeed, the chevalier had just made a master-stroke.

While his acquaintance with his neighbor was so little advanced, it was impossible that both windows should remain open at once. If the chevalier's window was open, his neighbor's must be shut; and he knew that when that was closed there was not a chance of seeing even the tip of Mirza's nose behind the curtain; while if, on the contrary, his window was closed, hers might possibly remain open, and he could watch her passing to and fro, or working, which was a great amusement for a poor devil condemned to absolute seclusion. Besides, he had made an immense step, — he had saluted Bathilde, and she had returned his salute. They were no longer strangers to each other; but in order that their acquaintance might advance, he must be careful not to be too brusque. To risk speaking to her after the salute would have been risking too much; it was better to allow Bathilde to believe that it was all the effect of chance.

Bathilde did not believe it, but she appeared to do so. The result was that she left her window open, and seeing her neighbor's closed, sat down by her own with a book in her hand. As to Mirza, she jumped upon the stool at her mistress's feet, but instead of resting her head as usual on the knees of the young girl, she placed it on the sill of the window, so much was she occupied with the generous unknown.

The chevalier seated himself in the middle of his room, took his crayons, and thanks to a corner of his curtain skilfully raised, he sketched the delicious picture before him. Unfortunately the days were short, and toward three o'clock the little light which the clouds and rain had permitted to descend to the earth began to decline, and Bathilde closed her window. Nevertheless, even in short time the chevalier had finished the young girl's

head, and the likeness was perfect. There was her waving hair, her fine transparent skin, the graceful curve of her swan-like neck, — in fact, all to which art can attain with one of those inimitable models which are the despair of artists.

When night closed in, the Abbé Brigaud arrived. The chevalier and he wrapped themselves in their cloaks, and went toward the Palais Royal; their purpose was, it will be remembered, to examine the locality.

The house in which Madame de Sabran lived, since her husband had been named *maître d'hôtel* to the regent, was No. 22, between the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon and the passage formerly called Passage du Palais Royal, because it was the only one leading from the Rue des Bons-Enfans to the Rue de Valois. This passage, now called Passage du Lycée, was closed at the same time as the other gates of the garden, — that is to say, at eleven o'clock in the evening; therefore, having once entered a house in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, unless it had a second door opening on the Rue de Valois, no one could return to the Palais Royal after eleven o'clock without making the round either by the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs or by the Cour des Fontaines.

Thus it was with Madame de Sabran's house; it was an exquisite little hotel, built toward the end of the last century, — that is to say, about twenty-five years before the time of the events here described, — by a merchant who wished to ape the great lords and have a *petite maison* of his own. It consisted of a ground-floor and a first story, surmounted by a stone gallery, on which opened the servants' attic-rooms, and was covered by a tile roof, low and but slightly inclined. Under the first-floor windows was a large balcony which jutted out three or four feet, and extended the entire length of the house; but some orna-

ments constructed of iron, as was the balcony, and which reached to the terrace, separated the two windows on each corner from the three in the middle, — an arrangement quite common with houses where it is desired to interrupt exterior communications. The two façades were exactly similar, only as the Rue de Valois was eight or ten feet lower than that of the Bons-Enfans, the ground-floor windows and door on that side opened on a terrace, where was a little garden, which in spring was filled with charming flowers. This terrace, however, did not communicate with the street, — the only entrance being, as we have said, in the Rue des Bons-Enfans.

This was all our conspirators could wish; the regent, once entered into Madame de Sabran's house, — provided he went thither on foot, as was possible, and stayed after eleven o'clock, as was probable, — would be caught in a trap, since it would be absolutely necessary for him to depart by the way in which he entered; and nothing would be easier than to carry out an enterprise of this kind in the Rue des Bons-Enfans, — one of the most deserted and gloomy places in the neighborhood. Moreover, as this street was surrounded by houses of a doubtful character, and frequented by very bad company, it was a hundred to one that but little attention would be given there to outcries, which were too frequent in that street to cause alarm, and that if the police should arrive, it would be, according to the custom of that estimable force, long after their intervention could be of any avail.

The inspection of the ground finished, the plans laid, and the number of the house taken, D'Harmental and the Abbé Brigaud separated, — the abbé to go to the Arsenal to give Madame du Maine an account of the proceedings, and D'Harmental to return to his attic.

As on the preceding night, Bathilde's room was lighted.

This time, however, the young girl was not drawing, but was occupied with needlework. Her light was not put out till one o'clock in the morning. As to the good man of the terrace, he had retired long before D'Harmental returned.

The chevalier slept badly. One does not find himself between a love affair at its beginning and a conspiracy at its culmination, without experiencing certain sensations till then unknown, and not very favorable to sleep. But toward morning fatigue prevailed, and he awoke only on feeling himself violently shaken by the arm. Without doubt the chevalier was at that moment in some bad dream, of which this seemed to be the crisis; for, still half asleep, he stretched out his hand toward the pistols which were on the table.

"Ah, ah!" cried the abbé, "an instant, young man. What a hurry you are in! Open your eyes wide, — so! Do you not recognize me?"

"Ah," said D'Harmental, laughing, "it is you, Abbé. You did well to stop me; I dreamed that I was arrested."

"A good sign," said the Abbé Brigaud. "You know that dreams always go by contraries. All will go well."

"Is there anything new?" asked D'Harmental.

"And if there were, how would you receive it?"

"I should be enchanted. When an enterprise of this kind is once undertaken, the sooner it is finished, the better."

"Well, then," said Brigaud, drawing a paper from his pocket and presenting it to the chevalier, "read, and glorify the name of the Lord, for you have your wish."

D'Harmental took the paper, unfolded it as calmly as if it were a matter of no moment, and read as follows: —

Report of the 27th of March.

Two in the morning.

To-night at ten o'clock the regent received a courier from London, who announces for to-morrow the arrival of the Abbé Dubois. As by chance the regent was supping with Madame, the despatch was given to him in spite of the late hour. Some minutes before, Mademoiselle de Chartres had asked permission of her father to perform her devotions at the Abbey of Chelles, and he had promised to conduct her thither; but on the receipt of this letter his determination was changed, and he has ordered the council to meet at noon.

At three o'clock the regent will pay his Majesty a visit at the Tuileries. He has asked for a tête-à-tête, for he is beginning to be impatient at the obstinacy of the Maréchal de Villeroy, who maintains that he ought always to be present at the interviews between the regent and his Majesty. Report says that if this obstinacy continues, it will be the worse for the marshal.

At six o'clock the regent, the Chevalier de Simiane, and the Chevalier de Ravanne, will sup with Madame de Sabran.

"Ah, ah!" said D'Harmental; and he read again the last sentence, weighing every word.

"Well, what do you think of this little paragraph?" asked the abbé.

The chevalier jumped from his bed, put on his dressing-gown, took from his drawer a crimson ribbon, a hammer, and a nail, and having opened his window (not without throwing a stolen glance at that of his neighbor), he nailed the ribbon to the outer wall.

"There is my answer," said he.

"What the devil does that mean?"

"That means," said D'Harmental, "that you may go and tell Madame du Maine that I hope this evening to fulfil my promise to her. And now go away, my dear Abbé, and do not come back for two hours, for I expect

some one whom it would be better you should not meet."

The abbé, who was prudence itself, did not wait to be told twice, but pressed the chevalier's hand and left him. Twenty minutes afterward Captain Roquefinette entered.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RUE DES BONS-ENFANS.

THE evening of the same day, which was Sunday, toward eight o'clock, at the moment when a considerable group of men and women, assembled round a street singer who was playing at the same time the cymbals with his knees and the tambourine with his hands, obstructed the entrance to the Rue de Valois, a musketeer and two soldiers belonging to the light-horse descended a back staircase of the Palais Royal, and advanced toward the Passage du Lycée, which, as every one knows, opened on that street; but seeing the crowd which barred the way, the three soldiers stopped and appeared to take counsel. The result of their deliberation was doubtless that they must take another route, for the musketeer, taking the initiative, threaded the Cours des Fontaines, turned the corner of the Rue des Bons-Enfans, and walking rapidly, though he was extremely corpulent, arrived at No. 22, which opened as by enchantment at his approach, and closed again on him and his two companions.

At the moment when they started on this little *détour*, a young man, dressed in a dark coat, wrapped in a cloak of the same color, and wearing a broad-brimmed hat pulled down over his eyes, left the group which surrounded the singer, singing himself, to the tune of "Les Pendus," "Vingt-quatre, vingt-quatre, vingt-quatre," and advancing rapidly toward the Passage du Lycée, arrived at the further end in time to see the three illustrious

vagabonds enter the house, as we have said. He threw a glance round him, and by the light of one of the three lanterns which lighted, or rather ought to have lighted, the whole length of the street, he perceived one of those immense coal-heavers, with a face of the color of soot, so well represented by Greuze, who was resting against one of the posts of the Hôtel de la Roche-Guyon, on which he had hung his bag. For an instant he appeared to hesitate to approach this man; but the coal-heaver having sung, to the tune of "Les Pendus," the same refrain which the young man in the cloak had been singing, the latter appeared to lose all hesitation, and went straight to him.

"Well, Captain," said the man in the cloak, "did you see them?"

"As plainly as I see you, Colonel, — a musketeer and two members of the light-horse; but I could not recognize them. However, as the musketeer hid his face in his handkerchief, I presume he was the regent."

"Exactly; and the other two are Simiane and Ravanne."

"Ah, ah! my pupil," said the captain, "I shall have great pleasure in seeing him again; he is a good boy."

"At any rate, Captain, take care he does not recognize you."

"Recognize me! He must be the devil himself to recognize me, accoutred as I am. It is you, rather, Chevalier, who should take care. You have an unfortunately aristocratic air, which does not suit at all with your dress. But that is not the question; here they are in the trap, and our business is to see that they don't get out. Have our men been told?"

"Your men, Captain? I know no more of them than they do of me. I left the group, and sang at the same time the refrain which was our signal. Did they hear me? Did they understand me? I know nothing of it."

"Be easy, Colonel. These fellows hear half a voice, and understand half a word."

Indeed, as soon as the man in the cloak had left the group, a strange fluctuation which he had not foreseen began to take place in the crowd, which appeared to be composed only of passers-by, so that the song was not finished, nor the collection taken. The crowd dispersed. A considerable number of men left the circle singly, or two and two, turning toward one another with an almost imperceptible gesture of the hand, some by the Rue de Valois, some by the Cour des Fontaines, some by the Palais Royal itself, thus surrounding the Rue des Bons-Enfans, which seemed to be the centre of the rendezvous. In consequence of this manœuvre, the intention of which it is easy to understand, there remained with the singer ten or twelve women, some children, and a good bourgeois, about forty years old, who, seeing that the collection was about to begin, left his place with an air of profound contempt for all these new songs, and humming an old pastoral which he appeared to hold far superior to the frivolities to which the bad taste of the time had given popularity. It seemed to him that several men as he passed them made him signs; but as he did not belong to any secret society or any Masonic lodge, he went on, singing his favorite —

"Then let me go,
And let me play
Beneath the hazel-tree,"

and after following the Rue St. Honoré to the Barrière des Deux-Sergens, turned the corner of the Rue du Coq and disappeared.

Almost at the same moment the man in the cloak, who had been the first to leave the group, reappeared, and accosting the singer, "My friend," said he, "my wife is

ill, and your music will prevent her sleeping. If you have no particular reason for remaining here, go to the Place du Palais Royal; and here is a crown to indemnify you."

"Thank you, Monseigneur," replied the singer, measuring the social position of the giver by his generosity. "I will go directly. Have you any commissions for the Rue Mouffetard?"

"No."

"Because I would have executed them into the bargain."

The man went away; and as he was at once the centre and the cause of the gathering, all those who had remained disappeared with him. At this moment the clock of the Palais Royal struck nine. The young man drew from his pocket a watch, whose diamond setting contrasted strangely with his simple costume. He set it exactly, then turned and went into the Rue des Bons-Enfans. On arriving opposite No. 24, he found the coal-heaver.

"And the singer?" asked the latter.

"He has gone."

"Good!"

"And the postchaise?" asked the man in the cloak.

"It is waiting at the corner of the Rue Baillif."

"Have they taken the precaution of wrapping the wheels and horses' hoofs in rags?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Now let us wait," said the man in the cloak.

"Let us wait," replied the coal-heaver.

An hour passed, during which a few passers-by crossed the street at intervals; but at length it became almost deserted. The few lighted windows were darkened one after the other; and night, having now nothing to contend

with but the two lanterns, one of which was opposite the chapel of St. Clair, and the other at the corner of the Rue Baillif, at length reigned over the domain which it had long claimed. Another hour passed. They heard the watchman go by in the Rue de Valois; behind him the keeper of the passage came to close the door.

"Good!" murmured the man in the cloak; "now we are sure not to be interrupted."

"Provided," replied the coal-heaver, "the regent leaves before day."

"If he were alone, we might fear his remaining, but Madame de Sabran will scarcely keep all three."

"Hum! she might lend her chamber to one, and let the other two sleep under the table."

"*Peste!* you are right, Captain; and I had not thought of it. Are all your precautions taken?"

"All."

"And your men believe that it is a question of a bet?"

"They appear to believe it at least, and we cannot ask more."

"Then it is well understood, Captain. You and your men are drunk. You push me. I fall between the regent and him who has his arm. I separate them. You seize on him and gag him, and at a whistle the carriage arrives, while Simiane and Ravanne are held with pistols at their throats."

"But," answered the coal-heaver, in a low voice, "if he declares his name."

The man in the cloak replied in a still lower tone, "In conspiracies there are no half-measures. If he declares himself, you must kill him."

"*Peste!*" said the coal-heaver; "let us try to prevent his declaring himself."

There was no reply, and all was again silent. A quar-

ter of an hour passed, and then a light which came from the farther side of the apartment illumined the three middle windows.

"Ah, ah, there is something new!" they both exclaimed.

At this moment they heard the step of a man who came from the Rue St. Honoré, and who was preparing to go the whole length of the street. The coal-heaver muttered a terrible oath. The man continued to advance; but either the darkness sufficed to frighten him, or he saw something suspicious moving there, for it was evident that he was agitated by some disturbing emotion. As he reached the Hôtel St. Clair, employing that old ruse of cowards who wish to appear brave, he began to sing. But as he advanced, his voice became more uncertain; and though the innocence of the song proved the serenity of his heart, on arriving opposite the passage, his fear became so strong that he began to cough, which, as we know, in the gamut of terror indicates a greater degree of fear than singing. Seeing, however, that nothing moved near where he was, he took courage, and in a voice more in harmony with his present situation than with the sense of the words, he began, —

"Then let me go,
And let me — "

but there he stopped short, not only in his song, but in his walk; for having perceived two men standing in a doorway, he felt his voice and his legs fail him at once, and he drew up motionless and silent. Unfortunately, at this moment a shadow approached the window. The coal-heaver saw that a cry might ruin all, and moved, as if to spring on the passenger; his companion held him back.

"Captain," he whispered, "don't hurt this man;" and

then, approaching him, "Pass on, my friend," he said, "but pass quickly, and do not look back."

The singer did not wait to be told twice, but made off as fast as his little legs and his trembling condition allowed, so that in a few seconds he had disappeared at the corner of the Hôtel de Toulouse.

"'T was time," murmured the coal-heaver; "they are opening the window."

The two men drew back as far as possible into the shade. The window was opened, and one of the regent's companions appeared on the balcony.

"Well!" said a voice, which the coal-heaver and his companion recognized as that of the regent, from the interior of the room. "Well, Simiane, what kind of weather is it?"

"Oh!" replied Simiane, "I think it snows."

"You think it snows?"

"Or rains, I don't know which," continued Simiane.

"What!" said Ravanne, "can't you tell what is falling?" and he also came out on the balcony.

"After all," said Simiane, "I am not sure that anything is falling."

"He is dead drunk," said the regent.

"I!" said Simiane, wounded in his pride as a toper, "I dead drunk! Come here, Monseigneur, come."

Though the invitation was given in a strange manner, the regent joined his companions, laughing. By his gait it was easy to see that he himself was more than warmed.

"Ah, dead drunk!" replied Simiane, holding out his hand to the prince. "Well, I bet you a hundred louis that, regent of France as you are, you will not do what I do."

"You hear, Monseigneur," said a female voice from the room; "it is a challenge."

"And as such I accept it; done, for a hundred louis."

"I go halves with whoever likes," said Ravanne.

"Bet with the marchioness," said Simiane; "I admit no one into my game."

"Nor I," said the regent.

"Marchioness," cried Ravanne, "fifty louis to a kiss."

"Ask Philippe if he permits it."

"Yes," said the regent, "it is a golden bargain; you are sure to win. Well, are you ready, Simiane?"

"I am; will you follow me?"

"Everywhere."

"What are you going to do?"

"Look."

"Where the devil are you going?"

"I am going into the Palais Royal."

"How?"

"By the roofs."

And Simiane, taking hold of the fan-like iron ornament which we have said separated the windows of the drawing-room from those of the bedroom, began to climb like a monkey.

"Monseigneur," cried Madame de Sabran, bounding on the balcony, and catching the prince by the arm, "I hope you will not follow."

"Not follow?" said the regent, freeing himself from the marchioness's arm; "do you know that I hold as a principle that whatever another man tries, I can do? If he goes up to the moon, devil take me if I am not there to knock at the door as soon as he! Did you bet on me, Ravanne?"

"Yes, my Prince," replied the young man, laughing.

"Then take your kiss, you have won;" and the regent seized the iron bars, climbing behind Simiane, who, active, tall, and slender, was in an instant on the terrace.

"But I hope you, at least, will remain, Ravanne?' said the marchioness.

"Long enough to claim your stakes," said the young man, kissing the beautiful fresh cheeks of Madame de Sabran. "Now, adieu," he continued, "I am Monseigneur's page; you understand that I must follow him." And Ravanne in his turn started eagerly on the perilous ascent already undertaken by his companions.

The coal-heaver and the man in the cloak uttered an exclamation of astonishment, which was repeated along the street as if every door had an echo.

"Ah, what is that?" said Simiane, who had arrived first on the terrace.

"Do you see, double drunkard?" said the regent, seizing the railing of the terrace, "it is the watch, and you will get us taken to the guard-house; but I promise you I will leave you there."

At these words those who were in the street were silent, hoping that the duke and his companions would push the joke no further, but would come down and go out by the ordinary road.

"Ah, here I am!" said the regent, landing on the terrace; "have you had enough, Simiane?"

"No, Monseigneur," replied Simiane; and bending down to Ravanne, "that is not the watch," he continued; "not a musket, — not a jerkin."

"What is the matter?" asked the regent.

"Nothing," replied Simiane, making a sign to Ravanne, "except that I continue my ascent, and invite you to follow me."

And at these words, holding out his hand to the regent, he began to scale the roof, drawing him after him. Ravanne brought up the rear.

At this sight, as there was no longer any doubt of their

intention, the coal-heaver uttered a malediction, and the man in the cloak a cry of rage.

"Eh, eh!" said the regent, sitting astride the roof and looking down the street, where by the light from the open windows of the salon they saw eight or ten men moving, "what the devil is that, — a plot? Ah, one would suppose they wanted to scale the house; they are furious. I have a mind to ask them what we can do to help them."

"No joking, Monseigneur," said Simiane; "let us go on."

"Turn by the Rue St. Honoré," said the man in the cloak. "Forward, forward!"

"It is indeed we whom they are after, Simiane," said the regent; "quick to the other side! Back, back!"

"I don't know what prevents me," said the man in the cloak, drawing a pistol from his belt and aiming at the regent, "from bringing him down like a partridge."

"Thousand thunders!" cried the coal-heaver, stopping him, "you will get us all quartered."

"But what are we to do?"

"Wait till they come down of themselves, and break their necks in falling; for if Providence is just, that little surprise awaits us."

"Oh, I have an idea, Roquefinette!"

"Eh, Colonel! no names, if you please."

"You are right; pardon!"

"There is no need; let us have the idea."

"Follow me!" cried the man in the cloak, springing into the passage. "Let us break open the door, and we will take them on the other side when they jump down."

Those of his companions who had still remained in that place followed him. The others, to the number of five or six, were already making for the Rue St. Honoré.

"Come, come, Monseigneur," said Simiane; "we have not a minute to lose. Slide on your back; it is not glorious, but it is safe."

"I think I hear them in the passage," said the regent; "what do you think, Ravanne?"

"I do not think at all," said Ravanne, "I let myself slip."

They all, with equal rapidity, slid down the slope of the roof, and landed on the terrace.

"Here, here!" said a woman's voice, at the moment when Simiane threw his leg over the parapet of the terrace to descend its iron ladder.

"Ah, is it you, Marchioness?" said the regent; "you are indeed a friend in need."

"Jump in here and descend quickly."

The three fugitives sprang into the room.

"Do you prefer to remain here?" asked Madame de Sabran.

"Yes," said Ravanne; "I will go and look for Canillac and his night-watch."

"No, no," said the regent; "they will be scaling your house and treating it as a town taken by assault. Let us gain the Palais Royal."

They descended the staircase rapidly and opened the garden door. There they heard the despairing blows of their pursuers against the iron gates.

"Strike, strike, my friends!" said the regent, running with the carelessness and activity of a young man toward the end of the garden; "the gate is solid, and will give you plenty of work."

"Quick, quick, Monseigneur!" cried Simiane, who, thanks to his great height, had jumped to the ground after letting himself down by his arms; "there they are, running toward the end of the Rue de Valois. Put your

foot on my shoulder — now the other — and let yourself slip into my arms. You are saved, thank God!"

"Draw your sword, Ravanne, and let us charge these fellows," said the regent.

"In the name of Heaven, Monseigneur," cried Simiane, urging on the prince, "follow us! I am not a coward, I believe, but what you would do is mere folly. Here, Ravanne."

And the young men, each taking one of the duke's arms, led him down one of those passages always open to the Palais Royal at the moment when those who were running by the Rue de Valois were only twenty paces from them, and when the door of the passage fell under the efforts of the second troop. The whole reunited band rushed against the gate at the moment that the three gentlemen closed it behind them.

"Gentlemen," said the regent, saluting with his hand, for as to his hat, God knows what had become of that, "I hope for the sake of your heads that all this was only a joke; for you are attacking those who are stronger than yourselves. Beware, to-morrow, of the lieutenant of police. Meanwhile, good-night." And a triple shout of laughter petrified the two conspirators leaning against the gate at the head of their breathless companions.

"This man must have a compact with Satan!" cried D'Harmental.

"We have lost the bet, my friends," said Roquefinette, addressing his men, who stood waiting for orders, "but we do not dismiss you yet; the affair is only postponed. As to the promised sum, you have already had half; to-morrow — you know where — you will have the rest. Good-evening. I shall be at the rendezvous to-morrow."

All the men dispersed, and the two chiefs remained alone.

"Well, Colonel?" said Roquefinette, looking D'Harmental full in the face.

"Well, Captain," replied the chevalier; "I have a great mind to ask one thing of you."

"What is that?" asked Roquefinette.

"To follow me into some by-lane, and blow my brains out with your pistol, that this miserable head of mine may be battered beyond possibility of recognition."

"Why so?"

"Why? Because in such matters, when one fails, one is but a fool. What am I to say now to Madame du Maine?"

"What!" cried Roquefinette, "is it about that little hop-o'-my-thumb that you are bothering yourself? *Pardieu!* you are frantically susceptible, Colonel. Why the devil does not her lame husband attend to his own affairs? I should have liked to see her, — your haughty prude, with her two cardinals and her three or four marquises, who are bursting with fear at this moment in a corner of the Arsenal, while we remain masters of the field of battle, — I should have liked to see if they would climb walls like lizards. Stay, Colonel, listen to an old fox. To be a good conspirator, you must have first, what you have, — courage; but you must also have what you have not, — patience. *Morbleu!* if I had such an affair in my hands, I would answer for it that I would bring it to a good end; and if you like to make it over to me, we will talk of that."

"But in my place," asked the colonel, "what would you say to Madame du Maine?"

"Oh, I should say, 'My Princess, the regent must have been warned by his police, for he did not leave as we expected, and we saw none but his *roué* companions, who cheated us of our prey.' Then the Prince de Cella-

mare will say to you, 'My dear D'Harmental, we have no resources but in you.' Madame du Maine will say, 'All is not lost, since the brave D'Harmental remains to us.' The Comte de Laval will grasp your hand trying to pay you a compliment, which he will not finish, because since his jaw is broken, his tongue is not active, particularly for compliments. The Cardinal de Polignac will make the sign of the cross. Alberoni will swear enough to shake the heavens. In this manner you will have conciliated everybody, saved your pride, and may return to hide in your attic, which I advise you not to leave for three or four days if you do not wish to be hanged. From time to time I will pay you a visit. You will continue to bestow on me some of the liberalities of Spain, because it is of importance to me to live agreeably, and keep up my spirits. Then at the first opportunity we recall our brave fellows and take our revenge."

"Yes, certainly," said D'Harmental, "that is what any other would do; but you see I have some foolish ideas, — I cannot lie."

"Whoever cannot lie cannot act," replied the captain. "But what do I see there? The bayonets of the watch! Amicable institution, I recognize you there, — always a quarter of an hour too late. But now adieu, Colonel. There is your road; we must separate," continued the captain, showing the Passage du Palais Royal. "And here is mine," he added, pointing to the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs. "Come, be calm; go quietly, that no one may suspect that you ought to run as fast as you can, — your hand on your hip, so, and singing 'La Mère Gaudichon.'" And the captain followed the Rue de Valois at the same pace as the watch, who were a hundred feet behind him, singing carelessly as he went.

As to the chevalier, he re-entered the Rue des Bons-

Enfans, now as quiet as it had been noisy ten minutes before; and at the corner of the Rue Baillif he found the carriage, which, according to his orders, had not moved, and was waiting with the door open, the lackey at the step, and the coachman on his box.

"To the Arsenal!" said the chevalier.

"It is useless," said a voice which made D'Harmental start. "I know all that has happened, for I was there; and I will inform those who ought to know. Your visit at this hour would be dangerous for all."

"Ah, it is you, Abbé," said D'Harmental, trying to recognize Brigaud in the livery in which he was disguised. "Very good! you will render me a real service in taking the news instead of me, for on my honor I don't know what to say."

"Well, I shall say," said Brigaud, "that you are a brave and loyal gentleman, and that if there were ten like you in France, all would soon be finished. But we are not here to pay compliments; get in quickly. Where shall I take you?"

"It is useless," said D'Harmental; "I will go on foot."

"Get in. It is safer."

D'Harmental complied, and Brigaud, dressed as he was, like a footman, unceremoniously took a seat by his side.

"To the corner of the Rue du Gros-Chenet and the Rue de Cléry," said the abbé.

The coachman, impatient at having waited so long, obeyed at once. At the place indicated the carriage stopped; the chevalier got out, and soon disappeared round the corner of the Rue du Temps-Perdu. As to the carriage, it rolled on noiselessly toward the Boulevards, like a fairy car which does not touch the earth.

CHAPTER XVI.

GOODMAN BUVAT.

Our readers must now make a better acquaintance with one of the principal personages in the history which we have undertaken to relate, whom as yet we have merely pointed out to them in passing. We refer to the worthy bourgeois whom we have seen leaving the group in the Rue de Valois, and making for the Barrière des Sergens at the moment when the street singer began his collection, and whom, it will be remembered, we have since seen at so inopportune a moment in the Rue des Bons-Enfans.

God forbid that we should disparage the intelligence of our readers so much as to doubt for a moment that they have recognized in the poor devil to whom the Chevalier d'Harmental had rendered such timely assistance the good man of the terrace in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. But they cannot know, unless we tell them in detail, what that poor devil was, physically, morally, and socially. If the reader has not forgotten the little we have already narrated concerning him, it will be remembered that he was from forty to forty-five years of age. Now, as every one knows, after forty years of age the bourgeois of Paris entirely forgets the care of his person, with which generally he is not much occupied, — a negligence from which his corporeal graces suffer considerably, particularly when, as in the present instance, they are not much to be admired on their own account.

Our bourgeois was a little man of five feet one inch, short and fat, with a tendency to become obese as he advanced in age, and with one of those placid faces where all — hair, eyebrows, eyes, and skin, — seem of the same color; in fact, one of those faces of which, at ten paces, one does not distinguish a feature. The most enthusiastic physiognomist, if he had sought to read on this countenance some high and curious destiny, would have been stopped in his examination as soon as he mounted from his great blue eyes to his depressed forehead, or descended from his half-open mouth to the fold of his double chin. Then he would have understood that he had under observation one of those heads to which all fermentation is unknown, whose freshness is respected by the passions, good or bad, and who turn nothing in the empty corners of their brain but the refrain of some old nursery song. Let us add that Providence, who does nothing by halves, had signed the original, of which we have just offered a copy to our readers, by the characteristic name of Jean Buvat. It is true that those who were able to appreciate the profound nullity of spirit and excellent qualities of heart of this worthy man usually suppressed the name given him in baptism, and called him simply, "Goodman Buvat."

In his early youth the little Buvat, who had a marked repugnance for all kinds of study, manifested a particular inclination for caligraphy. Thus he arrived every morning at the Collége des Oratoriens, where his mother sent him gratis, with his exercises and translations full of faults, but written with a neatness, a regularity, and a beauty charming to see. The little Buvat was whipped every day for the idleness of his mind, and received the writing-prize every year for the skill of his hand. At fifteen years of age he passed from the "Epitome Sacræ,"

which he had recommenced five times, to the "Epitome Græcæ;" but the professor soon perceived that this was too much for him, and put him back for another course in the "Epitome Sacræ." Passive as he appeared, young Buvat was not wanting in a certain pride. He came home in the evening, crying, to his mother, complained to her of the injustice which had been done him, and disclosed, in his grief, a fact which till then he had been careful not to confess; namely, that there were in the school children ten years old more advanced than he was.

Widow Buvat, who had seen her son start every morning with his exercises perfectly neat, which was enough to make her believe that there could be no fault in them, went the next day to abuse the good fathers. They replied that her son was a good boy, incapable of an evil thought toward God or a bad action toward his neighbor; but that at the same time he was so stupid that they must advise her to develop, by making him a writing-master, the only talent with which Nature had blessed him.

This counsel was a ray of light for Madame Buvat; she understood that if she acted on this advice the benefit she would derive from her son would be immediate. She came back to her house, and communicated to him the new plans she had formed for him. Young Buvat saw in this only a means of escaping the castigation which he received every morning, for which the prize, bound in calf, that he received every year was not a sufficient compensation. He received the propositions of his mother with great joy, promised her that before six months were over he would be the first writing-master in the capital, and the same day, after having, from his little savings, bought a knife with four blades, a packet of quills, and two copy-books, set himself to the work.

The good Oratorians were not deceived as to the true vocation of young Buvat. Caligraphy was with him an art almost equal to that of drawing. At the end of six months, like the ape in the "Arabian Nights," he wrote six kinds of writing, and imitated men's faces, trees, and animals. At the end of a year he had made such progress that he thought he might now give out his prospectus. He worked at it for three months, day and night, and almost lost his sight over it. At the end of that time he had accomplished a masterpiece.

It was not a simple writing, but a real picture, representing the creation of the world, and divided somewhat like "The Transfiguration" of Raphael. In the upper part, devoted to Eden, was the Eternal Father drawing Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam, and surrounded by those animals which the nobility of their nature brings near to man, such as the lion, the horse, and the dog. At the bottom was the sea, in the depths of which were to be seen swimming the most fantastic fishes, and which bore on its surface a superb three-decked vessel. On the two sides, trees full of birds put the heavens, which they touched with their topmost branches, in communication with the earth, which they grasped with their roots; and in the space left in the middle of all this, in a perfectly horizontal line, and reproduced in six different writings, was the adverb *impitoyablement*.

This time the artist had not misdirected his efforts; the picture produced the effect which he expected. A week afterward young Buvat had five male and two female scholars. His reputation increased; and Madame Buvat, after some years passed in greater ease than she had known even in her husband's lifetime, had the satisfaction of dying perfectly secure about her son's future.

As to him, after having sufficiently mourned his mother,

he pursued a course of life so exactly regulated that each day was like all others. He arrived thus at the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven, having passed the stormy part of existence in an unbroken tranquillity due to his innocent and virtuous good-nature. It was about this time that the worthy man found an opportunity of doing a sublime action, which he performed instinctively and simply, as he did everything; while perhaps a man of superior intelligence would have passed it over without seeing it, or turned away from it if he had seen it.

There was, on the first floor of the house No. 6, in the Rue des Orties, of which Buvat occupied the attic, a young couple who were the admiration of the whole quarter for the harmony in which they lived. They appeared made for each other. The husband was a man of from thirty-four to thirty-five years of age, of a Southern origin, with black eyes, beard, and hair, dark complexion, and teeth like pearls. He was called Albert du Rocher, and was the son of an ancient Cévenol chief, who had been forced to turn Catholic, with all his family, under the persecutions of Monsieur Bâville; and half from opposition, half because youth seeks youth, he had entered the household of Monsieur le Duc de Chartres, which was just at that time reconstructed, having suffered much in the campaign preceding the battle of Steenkerke, where the prince had made his début in arms. Du Rocher had obtained the place of La Neuville, who had been killed in that charge which, conducted by the Duc de Chartres, had decided the victory.

The winter had interrupted the campaign; but in the spring Monsieur de Luxembourg had recalled all those officers who divided their lives between war and pleasure. The Duc de Chartres, always eager to draw a sword which the jealousy of Louis XIV. had so often replaced in the

scabbard, was one of the first to answer this appeal. Du Rocher followed him with all the rest of his military household.

The great day of Nerwinden arrived. The Duc de Chartres had, as usual, the command of the guards; as usual, he charged at their head, and so furiously that five times he found himself almost alone in the midst of the enemy. On the fifth of these occasions he found himself supported by but one person, — a young man whom he scarcely knew. In the rapid glance which he cast on him he saw that this young man was one on whom he could depend; and therefore, instead of yielding, as a brigadier of the enemy's army who had recognized him proposed to him, he blew out the brigadier's brains with his pistol. At the same instant two shots were fired, one of which took off the prince's hat, and the other turned from the handle of his sword. Scarcely had these two shots been fired when those who had discharged them fell simultaneously, thrown down by the prince's companion, — one by a sabre-stroke, the other by a bullet. A general discharge of musketry was aimed at these two men, who, happily, or rather miraculously, were not hit. The prince's horse, however, mortally wounded in the head, fell under him. The young man who was with him jumped from his, and offered it to him.

The prince hesitated to accept this service, which might cost him who rendered it so dear; but the young man, who was tall and powerful, thinking that this was not a moment to exchange politenesses, took the prince in his arms and forced him into the saddle. At this moment, Monsieur d'Arcy, who arrived with a detachment of light-horse, came up with him just as, in spite of their courage, the prince and his companion were about to be killed or taken. Both were without wound, although the prince

had received four bullets in his clothes. The Duc de Chartres held out his hand to his companion, and asked him who he was; for although his face was known to him, he had been so short a time in his service that he did not remember his name. The young man replied that he was called Albert du Rocher, and that he had taken the place of La Neuville, who was killed at Steenkerke.

Then, turning toward those who had just arrived, "Gentlemen," said the prince, "you have prevented me from being taken; but this gentleman," pointing to Du Rocher, "has saved me from being killed."

At the end of the campaign, the Duc de Chartres named Du Rocher his first equerry, and, three years afterward, having continued the grateful affection which he had vowed to him, he married him to a young person whom he loved, and gave her a dowry. Unfortunately, as Monsieur le Duc de Chartres was still but a young man, this dowry was not large; but he promised to take charge of the advancement of his protégé.

This young person whom Du Rocher married was of English origin; her mother had accompanied Madam Henrietta when she came to France to marry Monsieur. And after that princess had been poisoned by the Chevalier d'Effiat, she had passed, as lady-in-waiting, into the service of the Grande Dauphine; but in 1690 the Grande Dauphine died, and the Englishwoman, in her insular pride, refused to stay with Mademoiselle Choin, and retired to a little country-house which she hired near St. Cloud, where she gave herself up entirely to the education of her little Clarice. It was in the journeys of the Duc de Chartres to St. Cloud that Du Rocher made acquaintance with this young girl, whom, as we have said, he married in 1697.

It was, then, this young couple who occupied the first floor of the house of which Buvat had the attic. They had first a son, whose caligraphic education was confided to Buvat from the age of four years. The young pupil was making the most satisfactory progress when he was carried off by the measles. The despair of the parents was great; Buvat shared it, the more sincerely because his pupil had exhibited a most docile disposition. This sympathy for their grief on the part of a stranger attached them to him; and one day, when the good man was complaining of the precarious future of artists, Albert du Rocher promised to use his influence to procure him a place in the government library. Buvat jumped with joy at the idea of becoming a public functionary. That very day his application was forwarded, in his best chirography, and a month later he received an appointment as employee in the royal library, in the manuscript department, with a salary of nine hundred francs a year.

From this day Buvat, in the pride natural to his new position, neglected his scholars, and gave himself up entirely to the preparation of forms. Nine hundred francs, secured to the end of his life, was really a fortune, and the worthy writer, thanks to the royal munificence, began to lead a life of ease and comfort. He promised his good neighbors that if they had a second child no one but himself should teach him to write; and the poor parents wished much to give this increase of occupation to the worthy writer. God granted their wish. Toward the end of the year 1702 Clarice was delivered of a daughter.

Great was the joy through the whole house. Buvat did not feel at all at his ease; he ran up and down stairs, beating his thighs with his hands, and singing below his breath the refrain of his favorite song, —

"Then let me go
And let me play," etc.

That day, for the first time since he had been appointed, — that is to say, during two years, — he arrived at his office at a quarter past ten, instead of ten o'clock exactly. A supernumerary, who thought that he must be dead, had asked for his place.

The little Bathilde was not a week old when Buvat wished to begin teaching her the strokes and pot-hooks, saying that to learn a thing well, it is necessary to begin young. It was with the greatest difficulty that he was made to understand that he must wait till she was at least two or three years old. He resigned himself; but in anticipation of that time he set about preparing copies. At the end of three years Clarice kept her word; and Buvat had the satisfaction of solemnly putting her first pen into the hands of Bathilde.

It was the beginning of the year 1707; and the Duc de Chartres had become Duc d'Orléans by the death of Monsieur, and had at last obtained a command in Spain, whither he was to conduct troops to the Maréchal de Berwick. Orders were directly given to all his military household to hold themselves in readiness by the 5th of March. As first equerry, it was necessary that Albert should accompany the prince. This news, which formerly would have given him the highest joy, made him now almost sad, for the health of Clarice began to fill him with the greatest uneasiness; the doctor had allowed the word "consumption" to escape him. Whether Clarice felt herself seriously attacked, or whether, more natural still, she feared only for her husband, her burst of grief was so wild that Albert himself could not help crying with her. Little Bathilde and Buvat cried because they saw the others cry.

The 5th of March arrived; it was the day fixed for the departure. In spite of her grief, Clarice had busied herself with her husband's outfit, and had tried to make it worthy of the prince whom he accompanied; and therefore in the midst of her tears a ray of proud joy shone on her face when she saw Albert, in his elegant uniform, upon his noble war-horse. As to Albert, he was full of hope and pride. The poor wife smiled sadly at his dreams of the future; but in order not to dispirit him at this last moment, she shut up her grief in her own heart, and subduing the fears which she had for him, and perhaps also other fears which she felt on her own account, she was the first to say to him, "Think not of me, but of your honor."

The Duc d'Orléans and his army entered Catalonia in the first days of April, and advanced directly, by forced marches, across Arragon. On arriving at Segorbe, the duke learned that the Maréchal de Berwick held himself in readiness for a decisive battle. In his eagerness to arrive in time to take part in the action, he sent Albert on at full speed, charging him to tell the marshal that the Duc d'Orléans was coming to his aid with ten thousand men, and to pray that if it did not interfere with his arrangements, he would wait for him before joining battle.

Albert started on his mission; but bewildered in the mountains, and misled by ignorant guides, he was only a day before the army, and arrived at the marshal's camp at the very moment when the engagement was about to begin. Albert asked where the marshal was; they showed his position, on the left of the army, on a little hill, from which he overlooked the whole plain. The Duc de Berwick was there, surrounded by his staff; Albert put his horse to the gallop, and made straight toward him.

The messenger introduced himself to the marshal and

told him the cause of his coming. The marshal replied by pointing to the field of battle, and told him to return to the prince, and report to him what he had seen; but Albert had smelt powder, and was not willing to leave thus. He asked permission to wait till he could at least give him the news of a victory. The marshal consented. At that moment a charge of dragoons seemed necessary to the marshal; he told one of his aids to carry the order to charge to the colonel. The young man started at a gallop, but he had scarcely gone a third of the distance which separated the hill from the position of the regiment, when his head was carried off by a cannon-ball. He had not yet fallen from his stirrups when Albert, seizing this occasion to take part in the battle, set spurs to his horse, transmitted the order to the colonel, and instead of returning to the marshal, drew his sword, and charged at the head of the regiment.

This charge was one of the most brilliant of the day, and penetrated so completely to the heart of the imperial guard that they began to give way. The marshal had involuntarily watched the young officer throughout the mêlée, recognizing him by his uniform. He saw him arrive at the enemy's colors and engage in a personal contest with the standard-bearer; then, when the regiment had taken flight, he saw him returning with his trophy in his arms. On reaching the marshal, he threw the colors at his feet, and tried to speak; but instead of words, blood came to his lips. The marshal saw him totter in his saddle, and advanced to support him, but before he had time to do so, Albert had fallen; a ball had pierced his breast. The marshal sprang from his horse; but the brave young man lay dead on the standard he had won from the enemy.

The Duc d'Orléans arrived the day after the battle.

He regretted Albert as one regrets a gallant man; but after all, he had died the death of the brave, in the midst of victory, and on the colors he himself had taken. What more could be desired by a Frenchman, a soldier, and a gentleman?

The duke wrote with his own hand to the poor widow. If anything could console a wife for the death of her husband, doubtless it would be such a letter; but poor Clarice thought of but two things, — that she had no longer a husband, and that her child had no longer a father. At four o'clock Buvat came in from the library; they told him that Clarice wanted him, and he went down directly. The poor woman did not cry, she did not complain; she stood tearless and speechless, her eyes fixed and hollow as those of a maniac. When Buvat entered, she did not even turn her head toward him, but holding out her hand, she presented to him the letter. Buvat looked, with an air of bewilderment, to the right and to the left, trying to discover what was the matter, but seeing nothing to direct his conjectures, he looked at the paper and read aloud: —

MADAME, — Your husband has died for France and for me. Neither France nor I can give you back your husband, but remember that if ever you are in want of anything we are both your debtors. Your affectionate

PHILIPPE D'ORLÉANS.

"What!" cried Buvat, fixing his great eyes on Clarice, 'Monsieur du Rocher? It is not possible!"

"Papa is dead?" said little Bathilde, leaving the corner where she was playing with her doll, and running to her mother. "Mamma, is it true that Papa is dead?"

"Alas! yes, my dear child!" cried Clarice, finding at once words and tears. "Oh, yes, it is true; it is but too true! Oh, how unhappy we are!"

"Madame," said Buvat, whose dull imagination was slow in finding consolations to suggest, "you must not grieve thus; perhaps it is a false report."

"Do you not see that the letter is from the Duc d'Orléans himself?" cried the poor widow. "Yes, my child, your father is dead. Weep, my child; perhaps in seeing your tears, God will have pity on me." While speaking thus, the poor woman coughed so painfully that Buvat felt his own breast torn by it; but his fright was still greater when he saw that the handkerchief which she drew from her mouth was covered with blood. Then he understood that a greater misfortune threatened Bathilde than that which had just befallen her.

The apartments which Clarice occupied were now too large for her. No one was astonished when she left them for smaller ones on the second floor.

Aside from her grief, which dulled her other faculties, Clarice felt, in common with all other noble hearts, a certain unwillingness to ask, even from her country, a recompense for the blood which had been shed for it, especially while that blood was still warm. The poor widow hesitated, therefore, to present herself to the minister of war to present her claims. At the end of three months, when she took courage to make the first steps, the taking of Requena and that of Saragossa had already thrown into the shade the battle of Almanza. Clarice showed the prince's letter. The minister's secretary replied that with such a letter she could not fail in obtaining what she wanted, but that she must wait for his Highness's return. Clarice looked in a glass at her emaciated face, and smiled sadly.

"Wait!" said she; "yes, it would be better, I admit; but God knows if I shall have the time."

The result of this repulse was that Clarice left her lodg-

ing on the second floor for two little rooms on the third. The poor widow had no other fortune than her husband's savings. The little dowry which the duke had given her had disappeared in the purchase of furniture and her husband's outfit. As the new lodging which she took was much smaller than the other, no one was astonished that Clarice sold part of her furniture.

The return of the Duc d'Orléans was expected in the autumn, and Clarice counted on this to ameliorate her situation; but contrary to all the strategic customs of that period, the army, instead of going into winter quarters, continued the campaign, and news arrived that instead of returning, the duke was about to lay siege to Lerida. Now, in 1647, the great Condé himself had failed before Lerida; and the new siege, even supposing that it ever came to a successful issue, threatened to be wofully prolonged.

Clarice risked some new advances. This time they had forgotten even her husband's name. She again had recourse to the prince's letter, which had its ordinary effect; but they told her that after the siege of Lerida the duke could not fail to return, and the poor widow was again obliged to wait.

She left her two rooms for a little attic opposite that of Buvat, and she sold the rest of her furniture, keeping only a table, some chairs, Bathilde's little cot, and a bed for herself.

Buvat had seen, without taking much notice, these frequent removals; and although he was not very sharp, it was not difficult for him to understand his neighbor's situation. Buvat, who was a careful man, had some savings which he earnestly wished to put at his neighbor's disposal; but Clarice's pride increased with her poverty, and poor Buvat had never yet dared to make the offer.

Twenty times he had gone to her with a little package which contained his entire fortune, — that is to say, fifty or sixty louis, — but every time he left without having dared to take it out of his pocket. But one day it happened that Buvat, descending to go to business, having met the landlord making his quarterly round, and thinking that his neighbor might be embarrassed even for so small a sum, took the proprietor into his own room, saying that the day before Madame du Rocher had given him the money, that he might get both receipts at once. The landlord, who had feared a delay on the part of his tenant, did not care whence the money came, and willingly gave the two receipts.

Buvat, in the *naïveté* of his soul, was tormented by this good action as by a crime. For three or four days he did not venture to present himself to his neighbor, so that when he returned he found her considerably concerned for what she thought an act of indifference on his part. Buvat found Clarice so much changed during those four days that he went out from her presence shaking his head and wiping his eyes; and for the first time he went to bed without having sung, during the fifteen turns he generally took in his bedroom, —

"Then let me go,
And let me play," etc.,

which was a proof of melancholy preoccupation.

The last days of winter passed, and brought, in passing, the news that Lerida had surrendered; but at the same time it was announced that the young and indefatigable general was about to besiege Tortosa. This was the last blow for poor Clarice. She understood that spring was coming, and with it a new campaign, which would retain the duke with the army. Strength failed her, and she was obliged to take to her bed.

The position of Clarice was frightful. She did not deceive herself as to her illness. She felt that it was mortal; and she had no one in the world to whom she could commit her child. The poor woman feared death, not on her own account, but on her daughter's, who would not have even the stone of her mother's tomb to rest her head on; for the unfortunate have no tomb. Her husband had only distant relatives, from whom she could not and would not solicit aid. As to her own family, she — born in France, where her mother died — had not even known them; besides, she understood that if there were any hope from that quarter, there was no longer the time to seek it. Death was approaching.

One night Buvat, who the evening before had left Clarice devoured by fever, heard her groaning so heavily that he jumped from his bed and dressed himself to go and offer her help; but on arriving at the door, he did not dare to enter or to knock. Clarice was sobbing and praying aloud. At this moment Bathilde woke and called her mother. Clarice drove back her tears, took her child from the cradle, and placing her on her knees on her own bed, made her repeat what prayers she knew, and after each of them Buvat heard her cry in a sad voice, —

"Oh, my God! my God! listen to my poor child!"

There was in this nocturnal scene — the child scarcely out of the cradle, and the mother halfway to the grave, both in the silence of night addressing the Lord as their only support — something so deeply sad that good Buvat fell on his knees, and inwardly swore, what he had not dared to promise openly, that though Bathilde might be an orphan, yet she should not be abandoned. God had heard the prayers which had ascended to Him, and He had granted them.

The next day Buvat did what he had never dared to do before. He took Bathilde in his arms, rested his good-natured, round face against the charming little face of the child, and said softly, "Be easy, poor little innocent; there are yet good people on the earth."

The little girl threw her arms round his neck and kissed him. Buvat felt that the tears stood in his eyes, and as he had often heard that one must not cry before sick people, for fear of agitating them, he drew out his watch, and said in a gruff voice to conceal his emotion, "Ahem! it is a quarter to ten; I must go. Good-day, Madame du Rocher."

On the staircase he met the doctor, and asked him what he thought of the patient. As this was a doctor who came through charity, and did not consider himself at all bound to be considerate, since he was not paid, he replied that in three days she would be dead.

Coming back at four o'clock, Buvat found the whole house in commotion. The doctor had said that they must send for the viaticum. They had therefore summoned the curé, and he had arrived, and preceded by the sacristan and his little bell, he had without any preparation entered the sick room. Clarice had received him as she would have received the Lord, — that is to say, with her hands joined, and her eyes turned toward heaven; but the impression produced on her was not the less terrible. Buvat heard singing, and conjectured what must have happened. He went up directly and found the landing and the door of the sick room thronged by the gossips of the neighborhood, who, as was the custom at that time, had followed the holy sacrament. Round the bed of the dying woman, who was already so pale and motionless that but for the tears that ran down her cheeks she might have been taken for a marble statue lying on a tomb, the priests were in-

toning the prayers for the dying, and in a corner of the room the little Bathilde — whom they had separated from her mother, that the attention of the patient might not be distracted during her last act of religion — was seated on the ground, not daring to cry, frightened at seeing so many persons whom she did not know, and hearing so much that she did not understand.

As soon as she saw Buvat, the child ran to him as the only person she knew in this grave assembly. Buvat took her in his arms, and knelt with her near the bed of the dying woman. At this moment Clarice lowered her eyes from the heavens toward the earth. Without doubt she had been addressing to God her constant prayer that he would send a protector to her daughter. She saw Bathilde in the arms of the only friend she had in the world. With the penetrating glance of the dying she read this pure and devoted heart, and in that moment understood all that he had not dared to tell her. She sat up in bed and held out her hand to him, uttering a cry of gratitude and joy, such as the angels only can understand; and as if she had exhausted her remaining strength in this maternal outburst, she sank back fainting on the bed.

The religious ceremony was finished. The priests retired first, then the devotees followed; the indifferent and curious were the last to leave. Among these were several women. Buvat asked if there was none among them who knew a good sick-nurse. One of them presented herself directly, and declared, in the midst of a chorus of her companions, that she had all the necessary virtues for this honorable situation, but that on account of these good qualities, she was accustomed to be paid a week in advance, as she was much sought after in the neighborhood. Buvat asked what her charge was for a week.

She replied that to any other it would be sixteen francs, but as the poor lady did not seem rich, she would be contented with twelve. Buvat, who had just received his month's pay, took two crowns from his pocket and gave them to her without bargaining. He would have given double if she had asked it. This unexpected generosity gave rise to many conjectures, some of which were not complimentary to the dying woman; so true is it that a good deed is a thing so rare that when it appears to the eyes of men those who are shamed by it must always ascribe it to an impure or selfish motive.

Clarice was still fainting. The nurse entered on her duty at once, and for want of salts gave her vinegar to inhale. Buvat retired. As to Bathilde, she had been told that her mother was asleep. The poor child did not yet know the difference between sleep and death, and returned to her corner to play with her doll.

At the end of an hour Buvat returned to ask news of Clarice. She had recovered from her fainting, but though her eyes were open, she did not speak. However, she recognized him, for as soon as he entered she joined her hands as if to pray, and then she appeared to seek for something under her bolster. But the effort she made was too great, and she fell back motionless upon her pillow.

The nurse shook her head, and approaching the patient, "Your pillow is all right," she said; "you must not disarrange it." Then turning to Buvat, "Ah, these sick people!" she added, shrugging her shoulders; "they are always fancying that there is something making them uncomfortable; it is death, only they do not know it."

Clarice sighed deeply, but remained motionless. The nurse approached her, and passed over her lips the feather of a quill dipped in a cordial of her own invention, which

she had just brought from the apothecary's. Buvat could not endure this spectacle; he recommended the mother and child to the care of the nurse, and left.

The next day Clarice was still worse; for though her eyes were open, she did not seem to recognize any one but her daughter, who was lying near her on the bed, and whose little hand she held. On her part, the child, as if she felt that this was the last maternal embrace, remained quiet and silent. On seeing her kind friend, she said only, "Mamma sleeps."

It appeared to Buvat that Clarice moved, as if she heard and recognized her child's voice, but it might have been only a nervous trembling. He asked the nurse if the sick woman had wanted anything. She shook her head, saying, "What would be the use? It would be money thrown away. These apothecaries make quite enough already."

Buvat would have liked to stay with Clarice, for he saw that she had not long to live; but he never would have thought of absenting himself for a day from business unless he were dying himself. He therefore went as usual to the library, but was so sad and melancholy that the king did not gain much by his presence. His fellow-clerks remarked with astonishment that that day Buvat did not wait, at four o'clock, till the clock had finished striking to take off the false blue sleeves which he wore to protect his coat; but that at the first stroke of the clock he got up, took his hat, and went out. The supernumerary, who had already asked for his place, watched him as he went; then, when he had closed the door, "Well," said he, loud enough to be heard by the chief, "there is one who takes it easy!"

Buvat's presentiments were confirmed. On arriving at the house, he asked the portress how Clarice was.

"Ah, God be thanked!" she replied; "the poor woman is happy. She suffers no more."

"She is dead!" cried Buvat, with the shudder always produced by this terrible word.

"About three quarters of an hour ago," she replied; and she went on darning her stocking, and singing a merry song which she had interrupted to reply to Buvat.

Buvat ascended the steps of the staircase one by one, stopping frequently to wipe his forehead; then, on arriving on the landing where his room and that of Clarice were located, he was obliged to lean his head against the wall, for he felt his legs giving way. He stood silent and hesitating, when he thought he heard Bathilde's voice crying. He remembered the poor child, and this gave him courage. At the door, however, he stopped again; then he heard the groans of the little girl more distinctly.

"Mamma," cried the child, in a little voice broken by sobs, "will you not wake? Mamma, why are you so cold?" Then, running to the door, and striking with her hand, "Come, my kind friend, come!" said she; "I am alone, and I am afraid."

Buvat was astonished that they had not removed the child from her mother's room. The profound pity which the poor little creature inspired made him forget the painful feeling which had stopped him for a moment, and he raised his hand to open the door. The door was locked. At this moment he heard the portress calling him. He ran to the stairs, and asked her where the key was.

"Ah," she replied, "how stupid I am! I forgot to give it to you as you passed."

Buvat ran down as quickly as he could. "And why is the key here?" he asked.

"The landlord placed it here after he had taken away the furniture."

"What! taken away the furniture?" cried Buvat.

"Of course he has taken away the furniture. Your neighbor was not rich, Monsieur Buvat, and no doubt she owes money on all sides. Ah! the landlord will not stand tricks. The rent must be paid first; that is but fair. Besides, she does not want furniture any more, poor dear!"

"But the nurse, where is she?"

"When she saw that her patient was dead, she went away; her business was finished. But she will come back to shroud her, for a crown, if you like. It is generally the portress who does this; but I cannot, — I am too sensitive."

Buvat understood, shuddering, all that had occurred. He went up as rapidly now as he had gone slowly before. His hand shook so that he could scarcely find the lock; but at length the key turned, and the door opened. Clarice was extended on the floor on the mattress out of her bed, in the middle of the dismantled room. An old sheet was thrown over her, and was intended to cover her entirely, but little Bathilde had moved it to seek for her mother's face, which she was kissing when he entered.

"Ah, my friend," she cried, "wake my mamma, who sleeps still. Wake her, I beg!" And the child ran to Buvat, who, standing at the entrance to the room, was looking at this pitiable spectacle.

Buvat took Bathilde back to the corpse. "Kiss your mother once, for the last time, my poor child," said he.

The child obeyed.

"And now," said he, "let her sleep. One day God will wake her;" and he took the child in his arms and carried her away. The child made no resistance. She seemed to understand her weakness and her isolation.

He put her in his own bed, for they had carried away even the child's cot; and when she was asleep, he went out to give information of the death to the commissary of the quarter, and to make arrangements for the funeral.

When he returned, the portress gave him a paper, which the nurse had found in Clarice's hand. Buvat opened it and recognized the letter from the Duc d'Orléans. This was the sole inheritance which the poor mother had left to her daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

BATHILDE.

In going to make his declaration to the commissary of the quarter and his arrangements for the funeral, Buvat had not forgotten to look for a woman who could take care of little Bathilde, an office which he could not undertake himself, — firstly, because he was entirely ignorant of its duties; and secondly, because it would be impossible to leave the child alone during the six hours he spent daily at the library. Fortunately, he knew the very person he wanted, — a woman from thirty-five to thirty-eight years of age, who had been in Madame Buvat's service during the last three years of her life, and whose good qualities he had duly appreciated. It was arranged with Nanette — for this was the good woman's name — that she should live in the house, do the cooking, take care of little Bathilde, and have for wages fifty francs a year and her board.

This new arrangement must greatly change all Buvat's habits, — obliging him to have a housekeeper, whereas he had always lived as a bachelor, taking his meals at an eating-house. He could no longer keep his attic, which was now too small for his needs as a family man, and next morning he went in search of a new lodging. He found one in the Rue Pagevin, as he wished to be near the royal library, that he might not have too far to walk in wet weather. This apartment consisted of two chambers, a cabinet, and a kitchen. He took it on the spot,

and went to buy the necessary furniture for Bathilde and Nanette's rooms; and the same evening, after his return from business, they moved to their new lodgings.

The next day, which was Sunday, Clarice was buried; so that Buvat had no need to ask for a day's leave even for this.

For the first week or two, Bathilde asked constantly for her mamma; but her friend Buvat had brought her a great many pretty playthings to console her, so that she soon began to ask for her less frequently; and as she had been told that her mother had gone to join her father, she at length only asked occasionally when they would both come back.

Buvat had put Bathilde in the best chamber; he kept the other for himself, and put Nanette in the cabinet.

This Nanette was a good woman, who cooked passably, and had remarkable skill in knitting and spinning. In spite of these divers talents, Buvat understood that he and Nanette would not suffice for the education of a young girl; and that though she might write magnificently, know her five rules, and be able to sew and spin, she would still know only half of what she should. Buvat had looked the obligation he had undertaken full in the face. His was one of those happy organizations which think with the heart; and he well understood that though she had become his ward, Bathilde remained none the less the child of Albert and Clarice. He resolved, then, to give her an education conformable, not to her present situation, but to the name she bore.

In arriving at this resolution, Buvat had reasoned, very simply, that he owed his place to Albert, and consequently that the income of that place belonged to Bathilde. His salary of nine hundred francs he divided as follows: four hundred and fifty for music, drawing, and

dancing masters; four hundred and fifty for Bathilde's dowry.

Now, supposing that Bathilde, who was four years old, should marry at eighteen, the interest and the capital together would amount at the date of her marriage to something like nine or ten thousand francs. This was not much, he knew, and was much troubled by that knowledge; but he pondered over it in vain, — he could not make it more.

To defray the expense of their living, lodgings, and clothing for Bathilde and himself, and to pay Nanette's wages, he would again begin to give writing lessons and make copies. For this purpose he got up at five o'clock in the morning, and went to bed at ten at night. This would be all profit; for thanks to this new arrangement, he would lengthen his life by two or three hours daily. For some time these good resolutions prospered; neither lessons nor copies were wanting; and as two years passed before Bathilde had finished the early education he himself undertook to give her, he was able to add nine hundred francs to her little treasure.

When she was six years old Bathilde had what the daughters of the richest and noblest houses seldom have at that age, — masters for music, drawing, and dancing. Making sacrifices for this charming child was mere pleasure. She appeared to have received from God one of those happy organizations whose aptitude makes us believe in a former state of being; for they appear not so much to be learning a new thing as to be remembering something formerly known. As to her beauty, it amply fulfilled the brilliant promise of earlier days.

Buvat was very happy during the week when, after each lesson, he received the compliments of the master, and very proud on Sundays, when having put on his

salmon-colored coat, his black velvet breeches, and variegated stockings, he took Bathilde by the hand and went for his weekly walk.

It was generally toward the Chemin des Porcherons that he directed his steps. This was a rendezvous for bowlers, and Buvat had formerly been a great lover of this game. In ceasing to be an actor, he had become a judge. Whenever a dispute arose, it was referred to him; and his eye was so correct that he could tell at the first glance, and without fail, which ball was nearest the mark. From his judgments there was no appeal, and they were received with neither more nor less respect than those of Saint Louis at Vincennes. But it must be said to his credit that his predilection for this walk was not entirely egotistical; this walk led also to the marsh of the Grange Batelière, whose black and gloomy waters attracted a great many of those dragon-flies with the gauzy wings and golden bodies which children delight to pursue. One of Bathilde's greatest amusements was to run, with her green net in her hand, her beautiful fair curls floating in the wind, after the butterflies and dragon-flies. The result of this was that Bathilde had many accidents to her white frock; but provided she was amused, Buvat took very philosophically a spot or a tear. This was Nanette's affair. The good woman scolded well on their return; but Buvat closed her mouth by shrugging his shoulders and saying, "Bah! one can't put old heads on young shoulders." And as Nanette had a great respect for proverbs, which she occasionally used herself, she generally yielded to the force of this.

It happened also sometimes, but this was only on fête-days, that Buvat complied with Bathilde's request to take her to Montmartre to see the windmills. Then they set out earlier. Nanette carried a dinner, which they were

to eat on the esplanade of the abbey. They did not get home till eight o'clock in the evening, but from the Cross de Porcherons Bathilde slept in Buvat's arms.

Things went on thus till the year 1712, at which time the "great king" found himself so embarrassed in his affairs that the only thing left for him to do was to leave off paying his employees. Buvat was warned of this administrative measure by the cashier, who announced to him one fine morning, when he presented himself to receive his month's pay, that there was no money. Buvat looked at the man with an astonished air; it had never entered into his head that the king could be in want of money. He took no further notice of this answer, convinced that some accident only had interrupted the payment, and went back to his office singing his favorite

"Then let me go,
And let me play," etc.

"*Pardieu!*" said the supernumerary, who after waiting for seven years had at last been named employee the first of the preceding month, "you must be very light-hearted to sing when we are no longer paid."

"What!" cried Buvat; "what do you mean?"

"I mean that perhaps you have not gone to be paid."

"Yes, I have just come from there."

"Did they pay you?"

"No; they said there was no money."

"And what do you think of that?"

"Oh, I think," said Buvat, "that they will pay the two months together."

"Oh, yes, two months together! Do you hear, Ducoudray? He thinks they will pay the two months together! Father Buvat is a good fellow."

"We shall see next month," replied the second clerk.

"Yes," replied Buvat, to whom this remark appeared very just, "we shall see next month."

"And if they do not pay you next month, nor the following months, what shall you do, Father Buvat?"

"What shall I do?" said Buvat, astonished that there could be a doubt as to his resolution. "Well, that is easy to answer; I shall come just the same."

"What! if they stop paying, you will continue to come?"

"Monsieur," said Buvat, "for ten years the king has paid me down on the nail; surely, after that he has a right to ask for a little credit if he is embarrassed."

"Vile flatterer!" said the clerk.

The month passed, and pay-day came again. Buvat presented himself with perfect confidence that they would pay his arrears; but to his astonishment they told him that there was still no money. Buvat asked when there would be any. The cashier replied that he was too inquisitive. Buvat profusely begged pardon and returned to his desk, but this time without singing.

The same day the clerk resigned. Now, as it was difficult to replace a clerk who resigned because he was not paid, and whose work must be done all the same, the chief told Buvat to do the work of the departed clerk in addition to his own. Buvat undertook it without a murmur; and as his ordinary work had left him some time free, at the end of the month he had everything in good shape.

They did not pay the third month any more than the two others; it was a case of downright bankruptcy. But as we have seen, Buvat never haggled about his duties. What he had promised on the first impulse he did on reflection; but he was forced to attack his treasure, which consisted of two years' pay.

Meanwhile Bathilde grew. She was now a young girl thirteen or fourteen years old, whose beauty became every day more remarkable, and who began to understand all the difficulties of her position. For some time the walks to the Porcherons and the expeditions to Montmartre had been given up under pretext that she preferred remaining at home to draw or play on the harpsichord.

Buvat did not understand these sedentary tastes which Bathilde had acquired so suddenly. And as, after having tried two or three times to go out without her, he found that it was not the walk itself he cared for, he resolved, as he must have air upon a Sunday, to look for a lodging with a garden. But lodgings with gardens were too high-priced for one in poor Buvat's financial condition; and therefore, having seen in his travels the rooms to let in the Rue du Temps-Perdu, he had at once conceived the bright idea of taking a terrace instead of a garden; he had even reflected that the air of the terrace would be especially salubrious. He returned home to inform Bathilde of his project, and said to her that the only inconvenience he could discover in the proposed arrangement was that their rooms must be separated, and that she would be obliged to sleep on the fourth floor with Nanette, and he on the fifth. But what Buvat regarded as an inconvenience seemed to Bathilde, on the contrary, an advantage. For some time she had felt, with the instinct of modesty natural to woman, that it was not proper that her room should be separated only by a door from that of a man still young, and who was neither her father nor her husband. She therefore assured Buvat that from his description she was quite certain that the rooms would suit them admirably, and advised him to secure them at once. Buvat was delighted; the same day he gave notice

of his intention to give up his old lodgings, and at the half-term he moved.

Bathilde was right; for since her black mantle revealed the outline of beautiful shoulders, since her mittens showed the prettiest fingers in the world, since of the Bathilde of former times there was nothing left but her childish feet, every one was taking notice that Buvat was young, that the tutor and the pupil were living under the same roof. In fact, the gossips who, when Bathilde was six years old, worshipped Buvat's footsteps, began to cry out about his criminality, now that she was fifteen. Poor Buvat! If ever echo was innocent and pure, it was that of the room which adjoined Bathilde's, and which for ten years had sheltered his good round head, into which a bad thought had never entered, even in dreams.

But on arriving at the Rue du Temps-Perdu, it was still worse. In the Rue Pagevin, where his admirable conduct to the child was known, this remembrance had in some degree protected him against calumny; but already so much time had passed since those kindly deeds had been performed that even in the Rue Pagevin they were nearly forgotten. It was, then, very natural that the rumors which had begun to spread should follow them to their new abode, where they were altogether unknown, and where their inscribing themselves under two different names precluded any idea of very near relationship. Some supposed that they saw in Bathilde the result of an old passion which the Church had forgotten to consecrate; but this idea fell at the first examination. Bathilde was tall and slender, Buvat short and fat; Bathilde had brilliant black eyes, Buvat's were blue and expressionless; Bathilde's face was white and smooth, Buvat's was bright red. In short, Bathilde's whole person breathed elegance and distinction, while poor Buvat was the type of vulgar

good-nature. The result of this was that the women began to look at Bathilde with contempt, and that men called Buvat a lucky fellow.

It must be said, in justice to Madame Denis, that she was one of the last to believe in these rumors. We will show presently on what occasion she began to credit them.

The previsions of the clerk who resigned were realized. For eighteen months Buvat had not touched a sou of his pay, and yet he had not relaxed for a moment in his punctuality. Moreover, he was haunted with a fear that the ministry would turn away a third of the clerks for the sake of economy. Buvat would have looked on the loss of his place as a great misfortune, although it occupied him six hours a day which he might have employed in a lucrative manner. And therefore his zeal increased in proportion as his hope of payment diminished. The result was that his employers took care not to dismiss a man who worked the better the less they paid him.

His complete ignorance, however, of the time when that precarious situation would come to an end, and the daily diminution of his little treasure, which threatened soon to be exhausted, sobered Buvat's face to such a degree that Bathilde began to think that there was something going on of which she was ignorant. She thought it would be of no use to ask Buvat, and addressing herself to Nanette, who after sufficient urging avowed all to her, Bathilde learned for the first time all she owed to Buvat; and that to pay her masters, and to amass her dowry, Buvat worked from morning till night; and that the secret of his sadness was that in spite of this extra work, since his salary was not paid, he saw the time approaching when he would be obliged to tell Bathilde that they must retrench all expenses that were not absolutely necessary.

Bathilde's first impulse on learning of this devotion was to fall at Buvat's feet and express her gratitude; but she soon understood that to arrive at her desired end she must feign ignorance.

The next day Bathilde told Buvat, laughing, that it would be throwing away money to keep her masters any longer, for she knew as much as they did. Since, in Buvat's eyes, Bathilde's drawings were the most beautiful things in the world, and when she sang he was in the seventh heaven, he found no difficulty in believing her, particularly as her masters, with unusual candor, avowed that their pupil knew enough to go on with her studies unaided. Bathilde had such a purifying influence on all who approached her. But Bathilde was not satisfied with saving expense; she wished also to earn some money. Although she had made equal progress in music and drawing, she understood that drawing was her only resource, and that music could be nothing but a relaxation. She reserved all her attention for drawing; and as she was really very talented, she soon made charming sketches. At last one day she wished to know what they were worth; and she asked Buvat, in going to his office, to show them to the person from whom she bought her paper and crayons, and who lived at the corner of the Rue de Cléry. She gave him two children's heads which she had drawn from fancy, and begged him to ascertain their value. Buvat undertook the commission without suspecting any hidden purpose, and executed it with his ordinary *naïveté*. The dealer, accustomed to such propositions, turned the sketches round and round with a disdainful air, and criticising them severely, said that he could offer only fifteen francs each for them. Buvat was hurt, not by the price offered, but by the disrespectful manner in which the shopkeeper had spoken of Bathilde's

talent. He drew them quickly out of the dealer's hands, saying that he thanked him.

The man, thinking that Buvat considered the price too small, said that for friendship's sake he would go as high as forty francs for the two; but Buvat, offended at the slight offered to the genius of his ward, answered dryly that the drawings which he had shown him were not for sale, and that he had asked their value only through curiosity. Every one knows that from the moment drawings are not for sale they increase singularly in value, and the dealer at length offered fifty francs; but Buvat, little tempted by this proposition, by which he did not even dream of profiting, took the drawings and left the shop with all the dignity of wounded pride. When he returned, the dealer was standing, as if by chance, at his door. Buvat, seeing him, kept at a distance; but the shopkeeper came to him, and putting his two hands on his shoulders, asked him if he would not let him have the two drawings for the price he had named. Buvat replied a second time, sharply, that they were not for sale. "That is a pity," replied the dealer, "for I would have given eighty francs." And he returned to his door with an indifferent air, but watching Buvat from a corner of his eye. Buvat, however, went on with a pride that was almost grotesque, and without turning once, went straight home. Bathilde heard him as he came up the staircase striking his cane against the balusters, as he was in the habit of doing. She ran out to meet him, for she was very anxious to hear the result of the negotiation; and with the lingering habit of her childhood, throwing her arms round his neck, "Well, my friend," she asked, "what did Monsieur Papillon say?"

"Monsieur Papillon," replied Buvat, wiping his forehead, "is an impertinent rascal."

Poor Bathilde turned pale.

"How so?" she asked.

"Yes; an impertinent rascal, who, instead of admiring your drawings, has dared to criticise them."

"Oh! if that is all," said Bathilde, laughing, "he is right. Remember that I am but a beginner. But did he offer any price?"

"Yes," said Buvat; "he had even that impertinence."

"What price?" asked Bathilde, trembling.

"He offered eighty francs."

"Eighty francs!" cried Bathilde. "Oh, you must be mistaken!"

"I tell you he offered eighty francs for the two," replied Buvat, laying a stress on each syllable.

"But it is four times as much as they are worth," said the young girl, clapping her hands for joy.

"It is possible, though I do not think so; but it is none the less true that Monsieur Papillon is an impertinent rascal!"

This was not Bathilde's opinion; but not to enter on an awkward discussion with Buvat about money matters, she changed the conversation, saying that dinner was ready, — an announcement which generally gave a new course to the worthy man's ideas. Buvat gave back the drawings to Bathilde without further observation, and entered the little dining-room, singing the inevitable, —

"Then let me go,
And let me play," etc.

He dined with as good an appetite as if there had been no Monsieur Papillon in the world.

The same evening, while Buvat was making copies, Bathilde gave the drawings to Nanette, telling her to take them to Monsieur Papillon, and ask for the eighty francs he had offered to Buvat. Nanette obeyed, and Bathilde

awaited her return with great anxiety, for she still believed there must be some mistake as to the price. Ten minutes afterward she was quite reassured, for the good woman entered with the money. Bathilde looked at it for an instant with tears in her eyes, then kneeling before the crucifix at the foot of her bed, she offered up a thanksgiving that she was enabled to return to Buvat a part of what he had done for her.

The next day Buvat, in returning from the office, passed before Papillon's door, and his astonishment was great when, through the windows of the shop, he saw the drawings. The door opened, and Papillon appeared.

"Well, Papa Buvat," said he, "so you thought better of it, and made up your mind to part with the two drawings which were not for sale? Ah! I did n't know you were so cunning, neighbor. However, tell Mademoiselle Bathilde that as she is a good girl, out of consideration for her, if she will do two such drawings every month, and promise not to draw for any one else for a year, I will take them at the same price."

Buvat was astonished; he grumbled out an answer which the man could not hear, and went home absorbed in thought. He went upstairs without striking the baluster with his cane, as was his custom, and opened the door without noise, so that Bathilde was not aware of his approach. She was drawing; she had already begun another head. Perceiving her good friend standing at the door with a troubled air, she put down her paper and pencils, and ran to him, asking what was the matter. Buvat wiped away two great tears.

"So," said he, "the child of my benefactors, of Clarice Gray and Albert du Rocher, is working for her bread!"

"But, little father," replied Bathilde, half crying, half laughing, "I am not working, I am amusing myself."

The term "little father" was substituted on great occasions for "good friend," and ordinarily had the effect of dispelling the worthy man's anxieties, but this time it failed. "I am neither your little father nor your good friend," he murmured, "but simply poor Buvat, whom the king pays no longer, and who does not gain enough by his writing to continue to give you the education which a young lady like you ought to have." He let his arms fall with a despairing gesture, and his cane dropped out of his hands.

"Oh, you want to make me die with grief!" cried Bathilde, bursting into tears, so plainly was Buvat's distress painted on his countenance.

"I kill you with grief, my child?" said Buvat, with an accent of profound tenderness. "What have I done? What have I said? You must not cry. It wanted nothing but that to make me miserable."

"But," said Bathilde, "I shall always cry if you do not let me do what I like."

This threat of Bathilde's, puerile as it was, made Buvat tremble; for since the day when the child wept for her mother, not a tear had fallen from her eyes.

"Well," said Buvat, "do as you like, but promise me that when the king pays my arrears —"

"That is good, little father!" cried Bathilde, interrupting him; "we will consider the rest later; meanwhile, the dinner is getting cold." And taking him by the arm, she led him into the dining-room, where, by her wit and sprightliness, she soon succeeded in removing the last traces of sadness from Buvat's face. What would he have said if he had known all?

Bathilde thought she could do the two drawings for Monsieur Papillon in eight or ten days; there remained the half, at least, of every month, which she was deter-

mined not to lose. She therefore charged Nanette to search among the neighbors for some difficult, and consequently well-paid needlework, which she could do in Buvat's absence.

Nanette easily found what she sought. It was a time when laces were much in vogue. The great ladies paid fifty louis a yard for guipure, and then ran carelessly through the woods with these transparent dresses. The result of this was that many a rent had to be concealed from mothers and husbands; so that at this time there was more to be made in mending laces than in selling them. From her first attempt at work of this kind, Bathilde did wonders; her needle seemed to be that of a fairy. Nanette received many compliments on the work of the unknown Penelope, who repaired by day what was ruined by night.

Thanks to Bathilde's labors, a portion of which was unknown to all without, and even to Buvat himself, the comfort of the household was increased from two sources. Buvat, more tranquil, and seeing that although Bathilde had not spoken definitely on the subject, he must renounce his Sunday walks, which lost their charm when Bathilde no longer took them with him, concluded to be satisfied with the famous terrace which had determined him in the choice of his house. For a week he spent an hour morning and evening making his plans, concealing from every one meanwhile what he intended to do. At length he decided on having a fountain, a grotto, and an arbor.

One must see the citizen of Paris grappling with a fantastic conceit like that which had presented itself to Buvat when he determined to have a park upon his terrace, in order to understand how much which would at first seem impossible the patience of man can accomplish. The fountain was easily devised; as we have said, the

gutters, eight feet above the terrace, offered every facility for its operation. The arbor, too, could be contrived without difficulty; lattice-work painted green and covered with jasmine and honey-suckle would shield it sufficiently from the sun. But it was the grotto which would constitute the crowning triumph in these new gardens of Semiramis.

On Sunday, at early dawn, Buvat set out for the forest of Vincennes, where he sought for stones of peculiar form. Some of these were good representations of apes' heads; others resembled crouching rabbits; others still, toad-stools; and some were like cathedral bells. When he had collected a sufficient number of these stones he had them put into a wheelbarrow, and for the consideration of one franc, which every week he devoted to this purpose, he had them carried to the fifth story in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. It took three months to complete this first collection.

Next, Buvat passed from monoliths to vegetables. Every root so imprudent as to appear above ground in the form either of a snake or of a tortoise became the property of Buvat, who with a little pruning-bill in his hand wandered about with eyes fixed upon the ground with the eagerness of a man seeking treasure, and when he saw a woody form which pleased him, threw himself upon the ground with the fierceness of a tiger pouncing upon his prey. By pounding, hacking, and pulling he succeeded in drawing it from the soil. This persistent search, which the guards of Vincennes and St. Cloud attempted more than once to check, but without success, baffled as they were by Buvat's perseverance, lasted another three months, at the end of which he saw to his great satisfaction all his material collected.

Then the architectural work began. The largest as

well as the smallest stone which could serve in the building of the modern Babel was turned over and over on all its sides so that it should be seen to the best advantage; then it was placed carefully in position, and so cemented that each exterior projection should present a grotesque imitation of a man's head, an animal's body, a plant, a flower, or a fruit. Soon there was a curious conglomeration of objects very diverse in appearance, to which were added twining, crawling, climbing, all those roots, ophidian or batrachian in form, which Buvat had surprised in the very act of resembling some sort of reptile. Finally, the arched roof was finished, and the grotto served as a lair for a magnificent hydra, the most precious piece of the collection, to the seven heads of which Buvat had the happy idea of adding, in order to give them an air still more formidable, eyes of enamel and tongues of scarlet cloth. The result was that when the monster had reached completion it was only with some hesitation that Buvat approached the terrible cavern, and that at first nothing in the world would have tempted him to walk alone at night upon the terrace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

Buvat's Babylonian undertaking had occupied him twelve months. Meanwhile Bathilde had passed from her fifteenth to her sixteenth year, and the charming child had become a beautiful woman. It was during this time that her neighbor, Boniface Denis, had taken notice of her, and to such a degree that his mother, who could refuse him nothing, after having been for information to the Rue Pagevin, had presented herself, under pretext of neighborhood, to Buvat and his ward, and finally had invited them both to pass Sunday evenings with her.

The invitation was given with so good a grace that there was no way of refusing it, whatever might be Bathilde's repugnance to this interruption of her solitude. As for Buvat, he was delighted that some opportunity of amusement should be presented to Bathilde; besides, as he knew that Madame Denis had two daughters, perhaps he was not sorry to enjoy that triumph which his paternal pride assured him Bathilde could not fail to obtain over Mademoiselle Émilie and Mademoiselle Athénaïs.

But the event was not precisely what the good man had anticipated. Bathilde discovered at a glance the mediocrity of her rivals; and therefore when some one spoke of drawing, and called on her to admire some heads by these young ladies, she pretended to have nothing in

the house that she could show; while Buvat knew that there were in her portfolio two heads, one of the infant Jesus, and one of Saint John, both charming. But this was not all. When Bathilde was asked to sing, after Mesdemoiselles Denis had been heard, she chose a simple little romance in two verses, which lasted five minutes, instead of the grand composition which Buvat had expected, and which should have lasted three quarters of an hour.

However, to Buvat's great astonishment, this conduct appeared singularly to increase the regard of Madame Denis for the young girl; for Madame Denis, who had heard great praise of Bathilde's talents, had felt, notwithstanding her maternal pride, some uneasiness with respect to the event of an artistic struggle among these young ladies. Bathilde was overwhelmed with caresses by the good woman, who, when she had gone, declared that she was full of talent and modesty, and that she well deserved all the praises lavished upon her. A retired silk mercer raised her voice to recall the strange position of the tutor and the pupil, but Madame Denis imposed silence on this malicious tongue by declaring that she knew the whole story from beginning to end, and that it did the greatest honor to both her neighbors. Madame Denis overstepped the bounds of truth in professing to be so well-informed; but the lie was trivial, and was doubtless pardoned in consideration of its intention.

As to Boniface, in company he was dumb and a nonentity; he had been this evening so remarkably stupid that Bathilde, ascribing no importance to such a fellow, had hardly noticed him.

Boniface, on the contrary, having admired Bathilde from a distance, became quite crazy about her when he saw her near. From this time he began to sit constantly

at his window, and that obliged Bathilde to keep hers closed; for it will be remembered that Boniface then inhabited the room afterward occupied by the Chevalier d'Harmental.

This conduct of Bathilde, in which it was impossible to see anything but supreme modesty, only augmented the passion of her neighbor. At his request, his mother went again to the Rue Pagevin, and to the Rue des Orties, where she had learned from an old portress, who had become nearly blind and quite deaf, something of the death-scene we have related, and in which Buvat played so noble a part. The good woman had forgotten the names; she remembered only that the father was a handsome young officer, who had been killed in Spain, and that the mother was a charming young woman, who had died of grief and poverty.

Boniface also had been in search of information, and had learned from his employer, who was a friend of Buvat's notary, that every year, for six years past, five hundred francs had been deposited with him in Bathilde's name, which, with the interest, formed a little capital of seven or eight thousand francs. This was not much for Boniface, who, as his mother had said, would have three thousand francs a year, but at least it showed that Bathilde was not destitute.

Consequently, at the end of a month, during which Madame Denis's friendship for Bathilde did not diminish, seeing that her son's love greatly increased, she determined to ask her hand for him. One afternoon, as Buvat returned from business, Madame Denis waited for him at her door, and made a sign to him that she had something to say to him. Buvat followed her politely as she led him into the most retired room in the house. She closed the door, that she might not be interrupted; and when

Buvat was seated she asked him with much dignity for the hand of Bathilde for Boniface.

Buvat was overwhelmed by this proposal. It had never entered his mind that Bathilde might marry. Life without Bathilde appeared so impossible that he changed color at the bare idea. Madame Denis did not fail to remark the strange effect that her request had produced on him. She would not even allow him to think it had passed unnoticed. She offered him the bottle of salts which she always kept on the mantel-piece, in full sight, so that she might have occasion to repeat three or four times a week that her nerves were very sensitive.

Buvat, who was much agitated, instead of simply smelling the salts from a reasonable distance, put the flask close up under his nose. The effect was immediate. He bounded to his feet, as if the angel of Habakkuk had taken him by the hair. He sneezed for about ten minutes; then, having regained his senses, he said that he appreciated all the honor of the proposal made for Bathilde, but that, as Madame Denis was doubtless aware, he was only Bathilde's guardian; in which capacity he should accept the duty of communicating to her the proposal made, though obliged at the same time to leave her entirely free to accept or to reject it.

Madame Denis considered this a very proper reply, and conducted him to the door, saying that while awaiting a reply, she begged him to believe that she was his very humble servant.

Buvat went home, and found Bathilde very uneasy; he was half an hour late, — a thing which had not happened before for ten years. The uneasiness of the young girl was increased when she saw Buvat's sad and preoccupied air; and she wanted to know directly what it was that caused the abstracted mien of her good friend. Buvat,

who had not had time to prepare his speech, tried to put off the explanation till after dinner; but Bathilde declared that she should not go to dinner till she knew what had happened. Buvat was thus obliged to deliver on the spot, and without preparation, Madame Denis's proposal.

Bathilde blushed, as a young girl always does when one talks to her of marriage; then taking the hands of Buvat, — who had seated himself, fearing that his legs would fail to support him, — and looking at him with that sweet smile which was the sun of the poor writer, "So, then, little father," said she, "you have had enough of your daughter, and you wish to get rid of her?"

"I!" said Buvat, "I wish to get rid of you! No, my child; it is I who shall die of grief if you leave me."

"Well, then, little father, why do you talk to me of marriage?"

"Why," said Buvat, "because — because — some day or other you must marry; and by and by perhaps you will find a good husband, though, thank God, my little Bathilde deserves some one better than Monsieur Boniface."

"No, little father," answered Bathilde, "I do not deserve any one better than Monsieur Boniface, but —"

"Well, — but?"

"But — I will never marry."

"What!" cried Buvat, "you will never marry?"

"Why should I? Are we not happy as we are?"

"Are we not happy?" echoed Buvat. "*Sabre de bois!* I believe we are!"

Sabre de bois was an innocent profanity which Buvat allowed himself on great occasions, and which illustrated admirably the pacific inclinations of the worthy fellow.

"Well, then," continued Bathilde, with her angel's smile, "if we are happy, let us remain as we are. You know, little father, we must not tempt Providence."

"Come and kiss me, my child!" said Buvat. "Ah, it is as if you had just lifted Montmartre off my stomach!"

"You do not wish for this marriage, then?"

"I wish for this marriage!" cried Buvat; "I! I wish to see you the wife of that whelp of a Boniface! — that cub of Satan, whom I despised from the first, without knowing why! I know it now."

"If you do not desire this marriage, why do you speak to me about it?"

"Because you know well that I am not really your father; that I have no authority over you; that you are free."

"Indeed, am I free?" answered Bathilde, laughing.

"Free as air."

"Well, then, if I am free, I refuse."

"*Diable!* you refuse, and I am very glad of it," said Buvat; "but how shall I say that to Madame Denis?"

"How? Tell her that I am too young; that I do not wish to marry; that I want to remain always with you."

"Come to dinner," said Buvat; "perhaps a bright idea will strike me when I am eating. It is odd; my appetite has come back all of a sudden. Just now I thought I could not swallow a drop of water. Now I could drink the Seine dry."

Buvat drank like a Swiss, and ate like an ogre; but in spite of this infraction of his ordinary habits, no bright idea came to him; so that he was obliged to tell Madame Denis squarely that Bathilde was very much honored by her proposal, but that she did not wish to marry.

This unexpected response astounded Madame Denis, who had never imagined that a poor little orphan like Bathilde could refuse so brilliant a match as her son; consequently she answered very sharply that every one was free to choose, and that if Mademoiselle Bathilde chose to be an old maid, she was perfectly welcome.

But when she reflected on this refusal, which in her maternal pride she could not understand, all the old calumnies which she had heard about the young girl and her guardian returned to her mind; and as she was in a mood to believe them, she made no further doubt that they were true. Accordingly, when she transmitted to Boniface their beautiful neighbor's answer, she said, to console him for this matrimonial disappointment, that it was very lucky that the negotiations had terminated as they had, inasmuch as she had been informed of certain matters, which, had Bathilde consented, would have compelled her to prevent the marriage.

Madame Denis thought it incompatible with her dignity that after so humiliating a refusal her son should continue to inhabit the room opposite Bathilde's; she therefore gave him one on the ground-floor, and immediately offered for rent the room which Monsieur Boniface had left.

A week after, as Monsieur Boniface, to revenge himself on Bathilde, was teasing Mirza, who was standing in the doorway, not thinking the weather good enough for her to trust her little white feet out of doors, Mirza, whom the habit of being petted had made very irritable, darted out on Monsieur Boniface, and bit him cruelly in the calf of his leg.

It was in consequence of this that the poor fellow, whose heart was still suffering, and whose leg was hardly healed, cautioned D'Harmental to beware of Bathilde's coquetry, and to throw a sop to Mirza.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIRST LOVE.

Monsieur Boniface's room remained vacant for three or four months, when one day Bathilde, who was accustomed to see the window closed, on raising her eyes found that it was open, and at the window she saw a strange face; it was that of D'Harmental. Few such faces as that of the chevalier were seen in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. Bathilde, admirably situated, behind her curtain, for seeing without being seen, was attracted involuntarily. There was in our hero's features a distinction and an elegance which could not escape Bathilde's eyes. The chevalier's dress, simple as it was, betrayed the elegance of the wearer. Then Bathilde had heard him give some orders, and they had been given with that inflection of voice which indicates the habit of command.

The young girl had discovered at the first glance that this man was very superior in all respects to him whom he succeeded in the possession of this little room, and with the instinct natural to persons of good birth, she at once recognized him as being of high family. The same day the chevalier had tried his harpsichord. At the first sound of the instrument Bathilde had raised her head. The chevalier, though he did not know that he had a listener, or perhaps because he did not know it, went on with preludes and fantasias which showed an amateur of no mean talents. At these sounds, which seemed to wake all the musical chords of her own organization,

Bathilde had risen and approached the window that she might not lose a note, for such a performance was a thing unheard of in the Rue du Temps-Perdu. Then it was that D'Harmental had seen against the window the charming little fingers of his neighbor, and had driven them away by turning round so quickly that Bathilde could not doubt she had been seen.

The next day Bathilde thought it was a long time since she had played, and sat down to her instrument. She began nervously, she knew not why; but as she was an excellent musician, her fear soon passed away, and it was then that she executed so brilliantly that piece from "Armida" which had been heard with so much astonishment by the chevalier and the Abbé Brigaud.

We have shown how, on the following morning, the chevalier had seen Buvat, and had become acquainted with Bathilde's name. The appearance of the young girl, the reader will remember, had made the deeper impression on the chevalier from its being so unexpected in such a place; and he was still under the influence of the charm when Roquefinette entered and gave a new direction to his thoughts, which, however, soon returned to Bathilde.

The next day, Bathilde, who, attracted by the first rays of the spring sun, was early at her window, became aware that the eyes of the chevalier were ardently fixed upon her. She had noticed his face, young and handsome, to which the thought of the responsibility he had taken gave a certain air of sadness; but sadness and youth go so badly together that this anomaly had interested her. This handsome young man, then, had something to annoy him; perhaps he was unhappy. What could be his sorrow? Thus, from the second time she had seen him, Bathilde's thoughts had been led quite naturally to dwell upon the

chevalier. This had not prevented Bathilde from shutting her window; but from behind her window she had seen the chevalier's sad face become sadder still. Then she had instinctively understood that she had given pain to that handsome young man; and when she sat down to her harpsichord, was she not directed by a secret feeling that music is the consoler of troubled hearts?

That evening it was D'Harmental who played; and Bathilde listened with all her soul to the melodious voice which spoke of love in the dead of night. Unluckily for the chevalier, who, seeing the shadow of the young girl behind the drapery, began to think that he was making a favorable impression on the other side of the street, he had been interrupted in his concert by the lodger on the third floor. But the most important thing was accomplished, — there was already a point of sympathy between them, and they already spoke that language of the heart, the most dangerous of all.

The next morning Bathilde, who had dreamed all night about music, and a little about the musician, felt that something strange and unknown was taking place within her, and though she was strongly attracted toward the window, she kept it scrupulously closed. From this resulted the mood of impatience under the influence of which the chevalier had gone to breakfast with Madame Denis.

There he had learned one important piece of news, which was that Bathilde was neither the daughter, the wife, nor the niece of Buvat. He had therefore gone upstairs joyfully, and finding the window open, he had put himself — in spite of the friendly advice of Boniface — in communication with Mirza, by means of bribing her with sugar. The unexpected return of Bathilde had interrupted this amusement; the chevalier, in his egotistical

delicacy, had shut his window; but before the window had been shut, a salute had been exchanged between the two young people. This was more than Bathilde had ever accorded to any man, — not that she had not from time to time exchanged salutes with some acquaintance of Buvat, but this was the first time she had blushed as she did so.

The next day Bathilde had seen the chevalier at his window, and without being able to understand the action, had seen him nail a crimson ribbon to the outer wall; she had especially noticed the extraordinary animation visible on the young man's face. Half an hour afterward she had seen with the chevalier a man unknown to her, but whose appearance was not reassuring; this was Captain Roquefinette. Bathilde had also noticed, with a vague uneasiness, that as soon as the man with the long sword had entered, the chevalier had quickly fastened the door.

The chevalier, as we know, had a long conference with the captain; for they had to arrange all the preparations for the evening's expedition. The chevalier's window therefore remained so long closed that Bathilde, thinking that he had gone out, had thought she might without impropriety open her own. Hardly was it open, however, when that of her neighbor, who had seemed only to await this moment to put himself in communication with her, opened in its turn. Fortunately, Bathilde, who would have been much embarrassed by this coincidence, was in that part of the room where the chevalier could not see her. She determined, therefore, to keep herself out of sight so long as this state of things should continue, and she sat down near the other window, which was still shut.

Mirza, however, who had not the same scruples as her

mistress, no sooner saw the chevalier than she ran to the window, placed her paws on the sill, and began dancing on her hind-feet. These attentions were rewarded, as she had expected, by a first, then a second, then a third lump of sugar; but this third bit, to the no small astonishment of Bathilde, was wrapped up in a piece of paper.

This piece of paper troubled Bathilde a great deal more than it did Mirza, who, accustomed to crackers and *sucre de pomme*, soon got the sugar out of its envelope by means of her paws; and as she thought very much of the contents of the package and very little of the wrapper, she ate the sugar, and leaving the paper, ran to the window. But the chevalier had disappeared; assured, no doubt, of Mirza's skill, he had retired into his room.

Bathilde was very much embarrassed; she had seen at the first glance that the paper contained three or four lines of writing. Now, in spite of the sudden friendship which her neighbor seemed to have acquired for Mirza, it could not be to Mirza that he wrote; the letter, then, was for Bathilde.

But what was to be done with that letter? To pick it up and destroy it would be very noble and very proper; but if, as was quite possible, the paper had contained that writing for a long time, then the action would be ridiculous in the highest degree, and, besides, it would show that she had thought it might be a letter. Bathilde resolved, then, to leave things as they were. The chevalier could not know that she was at home, since he had not seen her; he could not, therefore, draw any deduction from the fact that the paper remained on the floor. She therefore continued to work, or rather to reflect, hidden behind her curtain, as the chevalier probably was hidden hind his.

In about an hour, of which it must be confessed Ba-

thilde passed three quarters with her eyes fixed on the paper, Nanette entered. Bathilde, without moving, told her to shut the window.

Nanette obeyed; but in returning she saw the paper. "What is that?" she asked, stooping down to pick it up.

"Nothing," answered Bathilde, quickly, forgetting that Nanette could not read, "only a paper which has fallen out of my pocket," — then, after an instant's pause, and with a visible effort, — "and which you may throw on the fire," she added.

"But it may be something important; see what it is, at all events, Mademoiselle." And Nanette presented the letter to Bathilde.

The temptation was too strong to be overcome. Bathilde cast her eyes on the paper, affecting an air of indifference, and read as follows: —

"They say you are an orphan. I have no parents. We are, then, brother and sister before God. This evening I shall be exposed to a great danger; but I hope to come out of it safe and sound if my sister Bathilde will pray for her brother Raoul."

"You are right," said Bathilde, in an agitated voice, and taking the paper from the hands of Nanette, "that paper is more important than I thought;" and she put D'Harmental's letter in the pocket of her apron. Five minutes after, Nanette, who came in twenty times a day without any particular reason, went out as she had entered, and left Bathilde alone.

Bathilde had only glanced at the letter, and it had seemed to dazzle her. As soon as Nanette had closed the door, she reopened it and read it a second time.

It would have been impossible to have said more in fewer words. If D'Harmental had taken a whole day to

weigh every word of the billet, instead of writing on the spur of the moment, he could not have devised it more skilfully. In fact, he established, with his first words, an equality of social rank between himself and the orphan; he interested Bathilde in her neighbor's fate on account of a menacing danger, — a danger which would appear all the greater to the young girl from her not knowing its nature; and finally, the words "brother" and "sister," so skilfully introduced in closing, — and that only to ask from the sister a prayer for the brother, — excluded from these first advances all idea of love. And if at this moment Bathilde had found herself face to face with D'Harmental, instead of being embarrassed and blushing like a young girl who has just received her first love-letter, she would have taken him by the hand and said to him, smiling, "Be satisfied; I will pray for you."

There remained, however, on the mind of Bathilde something more dangerous than all the declarations in the world, and that was the idea of the peril which her neighbor was about to incur. By a sort of presentiment with which she had been seized on seeing him, with a face so different from his ordinary expression, nail the crimson ribbon to his window, and withdraw it as soon as the captain entered, she was almost sure that the danger was somehow connected with this new personage, whom she had never seen before. But how was this danger connected with him? What was the nature of the danger itself? This was what she asked herself in vain. She thought of a duel; but to a man such as the chevalier appeared to be, a duel was not one of those dangers for which one asks the prayers of women. Besides, the time indicated was not that which is usually appointed for duels. Bathilde lost herself in her conjectures; but in losing herself, she thought of the chevalier, always of the

chevalier, and of nothing but the chevalier, and if he had calculated upon such an effect, it must be owned that his calculations were wofully true for poor Bathilde.

During the remainder of the day Bathilde saw Raoul no more. Either because he was busily employed or because he considered it good strategy, he kept his window obstinately closed. And therefore, when Buvat came home as usual, at ten minutes after four, he found the young girl so much preoccupied that although his perspicacity was not great in such matters, he asked her three or four times if anything was wrong; she answered him every time by one of those smiles which interested Buvat so much in looking at her that he forgot everything else. The consequence was that in spite of these repeated questions Bathilde kept her secret.

After dinner Monsieur de Chaulieu's lackey entered; he came to ask Buvat to spend the evening with his master, who had several poems for him to copy. The Abbé de Chaulieu was one of Buvat's best patrons, and often came to his house, for he had taken a great liking for Bathilde. The poor abbé became blind, but not so entirely as not to be able to recognize a pretty face; though it is true that he saw it through a cloud. The abbé had told Bathilde, in his sexagenarian gallantry, that his only consolation was that it is thus that one sees the angels.

Bathilde thanked the good abbé from the bottom of her heart for thus procuring her an evening's solitude. She knew that when Buvat went to visit the Abbé de Chaulieu he ordinarily stayed a long time; and she hoped that he would make as long a visit on this occasion as he was accustomed to make. Poor Buvat went out without imagining that for the first time she desired his absence.

Buvat was a lounger, like every other bourgeois of Paris. From one end to the other of the Palais Royal

he stared at the shops, stopping for the thousandth time before objects he was in the habit of admiring. On leaving the colonnade he heard singing, and saw a group of men and women who were listening to the songs; he joined them, and listened too. At the moment of the collection he went away, not from a bad heart, nor that he would have wished to refuse the excellent musician the reward which was his due, but because by an old habit, of which time had proved the advantage, he always came out without money, so that by whatever he was tempted he was sure not to yield to the temptation. This evening he was much tempted to drop a sou into the singer's bowl, but as he had not a sou in his pocket, he was obliged to go away. He made his way, then, as we have seen, toward the Barrière des Sergens, passed up the Rue du Coq, crossed the Pont-Neuf, and returned along the quay to the Rue Mazarine, it was in the Rue Mazarine that the Abbé de Chaulieu lived.

The Abbé de Chaulieu received Buvat, whose excellent qualities he had appreciated during their two years' acquaintance, as he was accustomed to receive him; that is to say, after much pressing on his part, and many difficulties on Buvat's, he made him sit down near himself before a table covered with papers. It is true that at first Buvat sat on the very edge of his chair; gradually, however, he got farther and farther on, put his hat on the ground, took his cane between his legs, and at length found himself sitting almost like any one else.

The work that was to be done did not promise a short sitting; there were thirty or forty poems on the table to be classified. The Abbé de Chaulieu began by naming them one after another in their order, while Buvat wrote on each a number. Then, that preliminary task being concluded, since the good abbé could not write, and em-

ployed his lackey as an amanuensis, he proceeded with Buvat to work of another kind; that is to say, to the correction of metre and orthography. The Abbé de Chaulieu did not weary of this occupation, and Buvat was interested in it as his proper business, so that the clock struck eleven when both of them thought it could be no later than nine.

They had just finished their work, and Buvat rose, horrified at having to return home at such an hour; it was the first time such a thing had ever happened to him. He rolled up the manuscript, tied it with a red ribbon, which had probably served as a sash to Mademoiselle de Launay, put it in his pocket, took his cane, picked up his hat, and left the house, abridging his leave-taking as much as possible. To add to his misfortunes, there was no moonlight, and the sky was darkened by clouds. Buvat regretted not having two sous in his pocket that he might cross the ferry, which was then where now stands the Pont des Arts; but we have already explained Buvat's theory to our readers, and he was obliged to return as he had come, — by the Quai Conti, the Rue Pont-Neuf, the Rue du Coq, and the Rue St. Honoré.

Thus far he proceeded in safety, and although the statue of Henri IV., of which Buvat had forgotten either the existence or the location, had frightened him terribly, and the clock of the Samaritaine, striking the half-hour without warning within fifty feet of him, had made him tremble from head to foot, he had encountered no real peril; but when he came to the Rue des Bons-Enfans all was changed. In the first place the aspect of the street itself, long, narrow, and lighted only by two flickering lanterns, was not reassuring, and this evening it had to Buvat a very singular appearance. He did not know whether he was asleep or awake, — whether he was

dreaming or had before him a fantastic vision of Flemish sorcery. In that street everything seemed to be alive; the posts moved as he passed them; all the recesses were full of whisperings; men crossed like shadows from one side of the street to the other. At last, when he had arrived at No. 24, he was stopped, as we have seen, by the chevalier and the captain. It was then that D'Harmental had recognized him, and had protected him against the first impulse of Roquefinette, urging him to go on his way as quickly as possible. There was no need to repeat the request; Buvat set off at a trot, gained the Place des Victoires, the Rue du Mail, the Rue Montmartre, and at last arrived at his own house, No. 4 Rue du Temps-Perdu, where, however, he did not think himself safe till he had shut the door and bolted it behind him.

There he stopped an instant to breathe and to light his candle, and then ascended the stairs; but he felt in his legs the effect of the occurrence, for they trembled so that he could hardly get to the top.

As to Bathilde, she had remained alone, getting more and more uneasy as the evening advanced. Up to seven o'clock she had seen a light in her neighbor's room, but at that time the lamp had been extinguished; the hours rolled on, and no light appeared in the chamber. Then Bathilde's time had been divided between two occupations: standing at her window to see if her neighbor did not return, and kneeling before the crucifix, where she said her evening prayers. She had heard the clocks strike nine, ten, eleven, and half-past eleven. She had heard all the noises in the street die away one by one, and sink gradually into that vague and heavy sound which seems the breathing of a sleeping town; and all this without bringing her the slightest information as to

whether he who had called himself her brother had sunk under the danger which had threatened him, or had passed through it in safety.

She was in her own room, without light, so that no one might see that she was watching, and was kneeling before her crucifix for the tenth time, when the door opened, and by the light of his candle she saw Buvat, so pale and haggard that she knew in an instant that something must have happened to him. She sprang up, moved by the anxiety she felt for another, and darted toward him, asking what was the matter.

But it was no easy thing to make Buvat speak; the shock had reached his mind, and his tongue stammered as much as his legs trembled. Still, when he was seated in his easy-chair, and had wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, when he had made two or three journeys to the door to see that the terrible visitants of the Rue des Bons-Enfans had not followed him home, he began to stutter out his adventure. He told how he had been stopped in the Rue des Bons-Enfans by a band of robbers, whose lieutenant, a ferocious man nearly six feet high, had wanted to kill him, when the captain had come and saved his life. Bathilde listened with rapt attention, first, because she loved her guardian sincerely, and his condition showed that — with or without reason — he had been greatly terrified; and then because it seemed to her that nothing which happened that night could be unimportant. Strange as the idea might be, the thought came to her that the handsome young man was perhaps not wholly unconnected with the scene in which Buvat had just played a part. She asked him if he had time to observe the face of the young captain who had come to his aid, and saved his life.

Buvat answered that he had seen him face to face, as

he saw her at that moment, and that he was a handsome young man, twenty-five or twenty-six years old, wearing a large felt hat, and wrapped in a cloak; moreover, in the movement which he had made in stretching out his hand to protect him, the cloak had opened, and shown that besides his sword, he carried a pair of pistols in his belt.

These details were so precise as to preclude the idea that Buvat had been dreaming. Preoccupied as Bathilde was with the danger to which the chevalier was exposed, she was none the less touched by that, smaller, no doubt, but still real, which Buvat had just escaped; and as repose is the best remedy for all shocks, physical or moral, after offering him the glass of wine and sugar which he allowed himself on great occasions, and which nevertheless he now refused, she reminded him of his bed, where he ought to have been two hours before.

The shock had been violent enough to deprive Buvat of all wish for sleep, and even to convince him that he should sleep badly that night; but he reflected that in sitting up he should force Bathilde to sit up, and should see her in the morning with red eyes and pale cheeks. Therefore, with his usual sacrifice of self, he told Bathilde that she was right, that he felt that sleep would do him good. He lighted his candle, kissed her forehead, and went up to his own room, — not without stopping two or three times on the staircase to listen for noises.

Left alone, Bathilde heard Buvat go from the landing into his room; then she heard the creaking of his door, which he double-locked; then, almost as trembling as Buvat himself, she ran to the window, in her anxiety forgetting everything, even to pray.

She remained thus for nearly an hour, but without having kept any measure of time. Then she gave a cry of joy; for through the window, which no curtain now

obscured, she saw her neighbor's door open, and D'Harmental enter with a candle in his hand.

By a miracle of divination Bathilde had been right in her conjecture. The man in the felt hat and the cloak, who had protected Buvat, was really the young stranger; for the stranger wore a felt hat and a cloak. Moreover, as soon as he had entered his room and shut the door, with almost as much care as Buvat had exercised in securing his, he threw his cloak on a chair, and she saw that he wore a tight coat of a dark color, and had in his belt a sword and pistols. There was no longer any doubt; from head to foot he answered the description given by Buvat. Bathilde was the more able to assure herself of this because D'Harmental, without taking off any of his attire, took two or three turns in his room, his arms crossed, and thinking deeply; then he took his pistols from his belt, assured himself that they were primed, and placed them on the table near his bed, unclasped his sword, took it half out of the scabbard, replaced it, and put it under his pillow; then, shaking his head, as if to shake off the sombre ideas that annoyed him, he approached the window, opened it, and gazed earnestly at that of the young girl, who, forgetting that she could not be seen, stepped back, and let the curtain fall before her, as if the darkness which surrounded her were not a sufficient screen.

She remained ten minutes thus motionless and silent, her hand on her heart, as if to still its beatings; then she gently raised the curtain, but that of her neighbor was down, and she saw nothing but his shadow passing and repassing behind it.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CONSUL DUILIUS.

The morning following the day, or rather the night, on which the events we have just related had occurred, the Duc d'Orléans, who had returned to the Palais Royal without accident, after having slept all night as usual, passed into his study at his accustomed hour; that is to say, about eleven o'clock. Thanks to the *sang-froid* with which Nature had blessed him, and which he owed chiefly to his great courage, to his disdain for danger, and his carelessness of death, not only was it impossible to observe in him any change from his ordinary calm, which ennui only turned to gloam, but he had most probably already forgotten the strange event of which he had so nearly been the victim.

The study into which he had just entered was remarkable as belonging to a man who was at once a savant, a politician, and an artist. Thus a large table covered with a green cloth, and loaded with papers, inkstands, and pens, occupied the middle of the room; but all around on desks, on easels, on stands, were an opera commenced, a half-finished drawing, a chemical retort, etc. The regent, with a strange versatility of mind, passed in an instant from the deepest problems of politics to the most capricious fancies of painting, and from the most delicate calculations of chemistry to the sombre or joyous inspirations of music. The regent feared nothing but ennui, that enemy against whom he struggled unceasingly, with-

out ever quite succeeding in conquering it, and which, repulsed by work, study, or pleasure, yet remained in sight, so to speak, like one of those clouds on the horizon, toward which, even in the finest days, the pilot involuntarily turns his eyes. Therefore the regent never allowed himself to be unoccupied, and had the most opposite amusements always at hand.

On entering his study, where the council were to meet in two hours, he went toward an unfinished drawing, representing a scene from "Daphnis and Chloe," and applied himself to the work interrupted two days before by that famous game of tennis which had begun with a racket-blow, and finished with the supper at Madame de Sabran's.

A messenger came to inform the regent that Madame Elizabeth Charlotte, his mother, had asked twice if he were up. The regent, who had the most profound respect for the princess-palatine, sent word that not only was he visible, but that if Madame was ready to receive him, he would pay her a visit directly. He then returned to his work with all the eagerness of an artist. Within a few minutes the door opened, and his mother herself appeared.

Madame, the wife of Philippe I., brother of King Louis XIV., came to France after the strange and unexpected death of Madam Henrietta of England, to take the place of that beautiful and gracious princess, who had passed from the scene like a dream. The comparison, difficult to sustain for any new-comer, was doubly so to the poor German princess, who, if we may believe her own portrait of herself, with her small eyes, her short and thick nose, her long thin lips, her hanging cheeks, and her large face, was far from beautiful. Unfortunately, the faults of her face were not compensated for by beauty

of figure. She was of low stature and fat, with a short body and legs, and such frightful hands that she avows herself that there were none uglier to be found in the world, and that it was the only thing about her to which Louis XIV. could never become accustomed. But Louis XIV. had chosen her, not to increase the beauties of his court, but to extend his influence beyond the Rhine.

By the marriage of his brother with the princess-palatine, Louis XIV. — who had already acquired some chance of inheritance in Spain by marrying Maria Theresa, and in England by Philippe I.'s marriage with the Princess Henrietta, only sister of Charles II. — would acquire new rights over Bavaria, and probably in the Palatinate. He calculated, and calculated rightly, that her brother, who was delicate, would die young and without children.

Madame, instead of being treated at her husband's death according to her marriage contract, and forced to retire into a convent, or into the old castle of Montargis, was, in spite of Madame de Maintenon's hatred, maintained by Louis XIV. in all the titles and honors which she enjoyed during her husband's lifetime, — although the king had not forgotten the blow which she gave to the young Duc de Chartres at Versailles, when he announced his marriage with Mademoiselle de Blois. The proud princess, with her thirty-two quarterings, thought it a humiliation that her son should marry a woman whom the royal legitimation could not prevent from being the fruit of a double adultery, and at the first moment, unable to command her feelings, she had revenged herself by this maternal correction — slightly excessive, administered to a young man of eighteen years — for the affront offered to the honor of her ancestors.

As the young Duc de Chartres had himself consented unwillingly to this marriage, he easily understood his

mother's dislike to it, — though he would have preferred, doubtless, that she should have shown it in a less Teutonic manner. The result was that when Monsieur died, and the Duc de Chartres became Duc d'Orléans, his mother, who might have feared that the blow at Versailles had left some disagreeable reminiscence in the mind of the new master of the Palais Royal, found, on the contrary, a more respectful son than ever. This respect increased; and as regent he gave his mother a position equal to that of his wife. When Madame de Berri, his much-loved daughter, asked her father for a company of guards, he granted her request, but ordered at the same time that a similar company should be given to his mother.

Madame held thus a high position, and if in spite of that position she had no political influence, the reason was that the regent made it a principle of action never to allow women to meddle with State affairs. It may be also that Philippe II., Regent of France, was more reserved toward his mother than toward his mistresses; for he knew her epistolary inclinations, and he had no fancy for seeing his projects made the subjects of the daily correspondence which she kept up with the Princess Wilhelmina Charlotte of Wales, and the Duke Anthony Ulric of Brunswick. In compensation for this reserve he left to her the management of the house and of his daughters, which in her great idleness the Duchesse d'Orléans abandoned willingly to her mother-in-law. In this last particular, however, the poor princess-palatine, if one may believe the memoirs written at the time, was not very successful. Madame de Berri lived publicly with Riom, and Mademoiselle de Valois was secretly the mistress of Richelieu, who, always eluding detection, as if he had the enchanted ring of Gyges, secured admission

to her apartments in spite of the guards who watched the doors, in spite of the spies with whom the regent surrounded him, and though more than once Philippe had hidden himself in his daughter's chamber, to watch.

As to Mademoiselle de Chartres, whose character had as yet seemed much more masculine than feminine, she, in making a man of herself as one may say, had seemed to forget that other men existed. But some days before the time at which we have arrived, being at the opera, and hearing her music-master, Cauchereau, a handsome and accomplished tenor of the Académie Royal, who, in a love scene, was prolonging a note with great purity of tone and a highly impassioned expression, the young princess, carried away by artistic enthusiasm, stretched out her arms and cried aloud, "Ah, my dear Cauchereau!" This unexpected exclamation had troubled her mother, who immediately dismissed the handsome tenor, and putting aside her habitual apathy, had determined to watch over her daughter herself.

There remained the Princess Louise, who was afterward Queen of Spain, and Mademoiselle Elizabeth, who became the Duchesse de Lorraine, but as to them there was nothing said; either they were really sedate, or else they understood better than their elder sisters how to restrain the sentiments of their hearts, or the accents of passion.

As soon as the prince saw his mother appear, he suspected some new disturbance in the rebellious troop of which she had taken the command, and which gave her such trouble; but as nothing could make him forget the respect which in public and in private he paid to his mother, he rose on seeing her, and after saluting her, took her by the hand and conducted her to a seat. He himself remained standing.

"Well, my son," said Madame, with a strong German

accent, "what is this that I hear, and what happened to you last evening?"

"Last evening?" said the regent, recalling his thoughts and questioning himself.

"Yes," answered the palatine, "last evening, in coming home from Madame de Sabran's."

"Oh, it is only that?" said the prince.

"What! 'only that!' Your friend Simiane goes about everywhere saying that they wanted to carry you off, and that you escaped only by coming across the roofs, — a singular road, you will confess, for the regent of the kingdom, and a road which your ministers, however devoted to you they may be, probably will decline to take in order to be present at your council."

"Simiane is a fool, Mother," answered the regent, unable to keep himself from laughing at his mother's still scolding him as if he were a child. "It was not anybody who wanted to carry me away, but some roisterers who had been drinking at the cabarets near the Barrière des Sergens, and had come to make a row in the Rue des Bons-Enfans. As to the road we followed, we chose it, not for flight, but simply to gain a wager which that drunken Simiane is furious at having lost."

"My son, my son!" said the palatine, shaking her head, "you will never believe in danger, and yet you know what your enemies are capable of doing. Believe me, those who calumniate the soul would have few scruples about killing the body; and you know that the Duchesse du Maine has said that the very day when she is quite sure that there is really nothing to be made out of her bastard of a husband, she will demand an audience of you, and drive her dagger into your heart."

"Bah, my Mother!" answered the regent, laughing, "have you become a sufficiently good Catholic no longer

to believe in predestination? I believe in it, as you know. Would you wish me to plague my mind about a danger which has no existence; or which, if it does exist, has its result already inscribed in the eternal book? No, Mother, no; the only use of all these exaggerated precautions is to sadden life. Let tyrants tremble; but I, who am, according to Saint-Simon, the most good-natured man since Louis le Débonnaire, what have I to fear?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* nothing, my dear son," said the palatine, taking the hand of the prince, and looking at him with as much maternal tenderness as her small eyes were capable of expressing, — "nothing, if every one knew you as well as I do, and saw you so truly good that you cannot hate even your enemies; but Henri IV., whom unluckily you resemble a little too much on certain points, was as good, and yet he none the less encountered a Ravaillac. Alas, *mein Gott!*" continued the princess, mixing up French and German in her agitation, "it is always the best kings that they assassinate; tyrants take precautions, and the poniard never reaches them. You must never go out without a guard; it is you, and not I, my son, who require a regiment of soldiers."

"My Mother," answered the regent, laughing, "will you listen to a story?"

"Yes, certainly, for you relate very prettily."

"Well, you know that there was in Rome, I forget in what year of the republic, a very brave consul, who had the unfortunate habit shared by Henri IV. and myself, of going out at night. It happened that this consul was sent against the Carthaginians, and having invented an implement of war called a crow, he gained against them the first naval battle in which the Romans had been victors; so that he returned to Rome, congratulating him-

self beforehand on the increase of fortune which would follow his increase of reputation. He was not deceived; all the population awaited him at the city gates, and conducted him in triumph to the capitol, where the senate expected him.

"The senate announced to him that in reward for his victory they had just voted to bestow on him an honor which must be highly pleasing to him; and this was that whenever he went out he should be preceded by a musician, who should announce to every one, by playing on the flute, that he was followed by the famous Duilius, the conqueror of the Carthaginians. Duilius, you will understand, my Mother, was at the height of joy at such an honor. He returned home with a proud bearing, and preceded by his flute-player, who played his best, amid the acclamations of the multitude, crying at the top of their voices, 'Long live Duilius! long live the conqueror of the Carthaginians! long live the savior of Rome!' This was so intoxicating that the poor consul nearly went crazy with joy. Twice during the day he went out, although he had nothing to do in the town, only to enjoy the senatorial privilege, and to hear the triumphal music and the cries which accompanied it. This occupation had raised him by the evening into a state of glorification such as it is not easy to explain. The evening came. The conqueror had a mistress whom he loved very much, and whom he was eager to see again, — a sort of Madame de Sabran, with the exception that the husband thought proper to be jealous, while ours, as you know, is not so absurd.

"The consul therefore had his bath, dressed and perfumed himself with the greatest care, and when eleven o'clock arrived, he set out on tiptoe for the Suburranian Street. But he had reckoned without his host, or rather

without his musician. Hardly had he gone four steps, when the flute-player, who was attached to his service by night as well as day, darted from a post on which he had been sitting, and recognizing his consul, took his place in advance and marched on, playing with all his might and main. The consequence of this was that those who were in the streets turned round, those who were at home came to the door, and those who were in bed got up and opened their windows, all repeating in chorus, 'Here is the Consul Duilius! long live Duilius! long live the conqueror of the Carthaginians! long live the savior of Rome!' This was highly flattering, but very inopportune. The consul wished to silence his instrumentalist, but he declared that the orders he had received from the senate were precise, — not to be quiet a minute; that he had ten thousand sesterces a year for blowing into his flute, and blow he would as long as he had any breath left.

"The consul saw that it was useless to argue with a man whose claim was sustained by a decree of the senate, and thereupon betook himself to flight in the hope of escaping from his melodious companion. But the latter adapted his pace to that of the consul with such precision that Duilius succeeded only in getting in advance of the flute-player, so that the consul led, instead of following. He doubled like a hare, leaped like a roebuck, rushed madly forward like a wild boar; the cursed flute-player did not lose his track for an instant, so that all Rome, not understanding the object of this nocturnal race, but knowing that it was the victor who was running, came to their windows and doors, and out into the streets, shouting, 'Long live Duilius! long live the conqueror of the Carthaginians! long live the savior of Rome!' The poor great man had one last hope, — that of finding his mistress's house quiet for the night, so that he could slip in at the

door left ajar as she had promised it would be. But, no; when he arrived at that hospitable and gracious house, at whose door he had so often poured perfumes and hung garlands, he found that its occupants were awake like all the rest; and at the window was the husband, who, as soon as he saw him, began to cry, 'Long live Duilius! long live the conqueror of the Carthaginians! long live the savior of Rome!' The hero returned home despairing.

"The next day he hoped to steal a march on his musician; but this hope was fallacious. And it was the same the day after, and the following days; so that the consul, seeing that it was impossible to keep his incognito, left for Sicily, where, in his wrath, he beat the Carthaginians again, but this time so unmercifully that every one thought that must be the end of Punic wars. Rome was so enthusiastic that it instituted public celebrations like those on the anniversary of the foundation of the city, and proposed to give the conqueror a triumph even more magnificent than the first. As to the senate, it assembled before the arrival of Duilius, to determine what reward should be conferred upon him. They were all in favor of a public statue, when suddenly they heard shouts of triumph and the sound of a flute. It was the consul, who had freed himself from the triumph, thanks to his haste, but who could not free himself from public gratitude, thanks to his flute-player. Suspecting that they were preparing for him something new, he came to take part in the deliberations. He found the senate ready to vote, with their balls in their hands.

"He advanced to the tribune. 'Conscript Fathers,' said he, 'is it not your intention to give me a reward which will be agreeable to me?' 'Our intention,' replied the president, 'is to make you the happiest man on earth.' 'Good!' said Duilius; 'will you allow me to ask from

you that which I desire most?' 'Speak!' cried all the senators at once. 'And you will confer it on me?' he inquired, with all the timidity of doubt. 'By Jupiter, we will!' answered the president in the name of the assembly. 'Then, Conscript Fathers,' said Duilius, 'if you think that I have deserved well of the country, take away from me, in recompense for this second victory, this cursed flute-player, whom you gave me for the first.' The senate thought the request strange, but they had pledged their word, and at that period promises were made to be fulfilled. The flute-player was allowed to retire on half-pay, and the Consul Duilius, having got rid of his musician, recovered his incognito, and without noise found the door of that little house in the Suburranian Street which one victory had closed against him, and another had reopened."

"Well," asked the palatine, "what has this story to do with the fear I have of your being assassinated?"

"What has it to do with it, Mother?" said the prince, laughing. "If the one musician of the Consul Duilius caused him such disappointment, imagine what would happen to me if I had a regiment of guards!"

"Ah, Philippe, Philippe!" answered the princess, laughing and sighing at the same time, "will you always treat serious matters so lightly?"

"No, Mother," said the regent; "and the proof is that as I presume you did not come here solely to read me a lecture on my nocturnal courses, but to speak on business, I am ready to listen to you, and to reply seriously."

"Yes, you are right," said the princess; "I did come to speak to you of other things. I came to speak of Mademoiselle de Chartres."

"Yes, of your favorite, Mother; for it is useless to deny

it, — Louise is your favorite. Can it be because she does not love her uncles much, whom you do not love at all?"

"No, it is not that, but I confess it is pleasing to me to see that she has no better opinion of the bastards than I have; but it is because, except as to beauty, which she has, and I never had, she is exactly what I was at her age, having true boy's tastes, — loving dogs, horses, and cavalcades, handling powder like an artilleryman, and making squibs like a workman. Well, guess what has happened to her."

"She wants a commission in the guards?"

"No, no; she wants to be a nun."

"A nun! Louise! Impossible; it must be some prank of her madcap sisters!"

"Not at all," replied the palatine; "there is no joke about it, I assure you."

"But how the devil has she got this passion for the cloister?" asked the regent, beginning to believe in the truth of what his mother told him, accustomed as he was to the incidents of a period when the most extravagant things were always the most probable.

"Where did she get it?" replied Madame; "ask God or the devil, for it is known only to the one or the other of those two. The day before yesterday she passed with her sister, riding, shooting, laughing, — in fact, I had never seen her so gay; but in the evening Madame d'Orléans sent for me. I found Mademoiselle de Chartres at her mother's knees, in tears, and begging permission to go and perform her devotions in the Abbey des Chelles. Her mother turned to me, and said, 'What do you think of this, Madame?' 'I think,' I replied, 'that we can perform our devotions equally well in any place, and that all depends on our own preparations;' but hearing my words, Mademoiselle de Chartres redoubled her prayers,

and with so much earnestness that I said to her mother, 'Well, my daughter, it is for you to decide.' 'Oh,' replied the duchess, 'we cannot prevent this poor child from performing her devotions.' 'Let her go, then,' I replied; 'and may God grant that she goes with that intention!' 'I swear to you, Madame,' said Mademoiselle de Chartres, 'that I go for God alone, and that I am influenced by no worldly idea.' Then she embraced us, and yesterday morning at seven o'clock she set out."

"I know all that, since I was to have taken her there," replied the regent. "Something, then, has happened since?"

"Yes, yesterday evening she sent back the carriage, giving the coachman a letter addressed to you, to her mother, and to me, in which she says that finding in the cloister that tranquillity and peace which she cannot hope for in the world, she does not wish to leave it."

"And what does her mother say to this fine resolution?" asked the regent, taking the letter.

"Her mother?" replied Madame. "To tell you the truth, I believe her mother is very glad, for she likes convents, and thinks that her daughter will find great happiness in becoming a nun; but I say there is no happiness where there is no vocation."

The regent read and re-read the letter of Mademoiselle de Chartres, trying to discover in that simple expression of her desire to remain at Chelles the secret causes which had given rise to it. Then after an instant of meditation, as deep as if the fate of empires depended on it, "There is some love pique here," said he. "Do you know if Louise loves any one?"

Madame related to the regent the adventure of the opera and the exclamation of the princess, in her admiration for the handsome tenor.

"*Diable!*" cried the regent, "and what did you and the Duchesse d'Orléans do in your maternal council?"

"We showed Cauchereau the door, and forbade the opera to Mademoiselle de Chartres; we could not do less."

"Well," replied the regent, "there is no need to seek further; it is all explained. We must cure her at once of this fancy."

"And how will you do that, my son?"

"I will go to-day to the Abbey des Chelles and interrogate Louise. If the thing is but a caprice, I will give it time to pass off. I will appear to adopt her views, and in a year from now, when the time arrives for her to take the veil, she herself will come and beg us to free her from the embarrassments of her position. If, on the contrary, the affair is serious, then it will be different."

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Madame, rising, "remember that poor Cauchereau has probably nothing to do with it, and that he is even ignorant of the passion he has inspired."

"Do not be afraid," replied the prince, laughing at the tragic interpretation which the princess, with her German ideas, had given to his words. "I shall not renew the lamentable history of the lovers of the Paraclete; Cauchereau's voice shall neither lose nor gain a single note in this adventure, and we do not treat a princess of the blood in the same manner as a little bourgeoise."

"But on the other hand," said Madame, almost as much afraid of the regent's real indulgence as of his apparent severity, "no weakness either."

"My Mother," said the regent, "if she must deceive some one, I would rather it should be her husband than God." And kissing his mother's hand respectfully, he led her to the door, quite scandalized at those lenient

customs in the midst of which she lived and died without ever succeeding in reconciling herself to them. Then the Duc d'Orléans returned to his drawing, humming an air from his opera of "Panthée."

In crossing the antechamber, Madame saw a little man in great riding-boots coming toward her, his head sunk in the immense collar of a coat lined with fur. When he reached her he poked out of his surtout a little face with a pointed nose and mocking eyes, bearing a resemblance at once to a polecat and a fox.

"Oh," said the palatine, "it is you, Abbé?"

"Myself, your Highness. I have just saved France, — nothing but that."

"Yes," replied the princess-palatine, "I have heard of such things, and also that in certain maladies poisons are found useful. You should know that, Dubois, — you, an apothecary's son."

"Madame," replied Dubois, with his habitual insolence, "perhaps I knew it once, but I have forgotten it. As your Highness may remember, I was quite young when I abandoned my father's drugs to take charge of your son's education."

"No matter, Dubois," said the palatine, laughing. "I am pleased with your industry, and if occasion arises for an embassy to China or Persia, I will ask the regent to appoint you ambassador."

"And why not to the moon, or to the sun?" replied Dubois. "You would be still surer never to see me again." And saluting Madame carelessly after that reply, without waiting for her to dismiss him, as etiquette required, he turned on his heel and entered the regent's study without being announced.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ABBÉ DUBOIS.

All the world knows the story of the Abbé Dubois's early days; we need not dwell upon it here. It may be found in the memoirs of the time, and particularly in those of the implacable Saint-Simon. Dubois has not been calumniated, — it was impossible; but all the evil has been told of him, and not quite all the good.

There was in his antecedents and in those of Alberoni, his rival, a great resemblance, but genius was on the side of Dubois; and in the long struggle with Spain, which the nature of our subject does not allow us to more than indicate, all the advantage was with the son of the apothecary against the son of the gardener. Dubois preceded Figaro, to whom he probably served as type; but, more fortunate than he, he passed from the office to the salon, and from the salon to the hall of the throne. All these successive promotions were the rewards of various services, private or public.

His last negotiation was his masterpiece; it was more than the ratification of the treaty of Utrecht; it was a treaty more advantageous still for France. The emperor not only renounced all right to the crown of Spain, as Philip V. had renounced all his to the crown of France, but he entered, with England and Holland, into a league, formed at the same time against Spain on the south and against Sweden and Russia on the north. The division of the five or six great States of Europe was established

by this treaty on so solid and just a basis that after a hundred years of wars and revolutions all these States, except the Empire, remain nearly in the same situation as at that time.

On his part, the regent, who was not very fastidious, loved this man, who had educated him, and whose fortune he had made. The regent appreciated in Dubois the virtues he possessed, and was not too severe on certain vices from which he was not exempt. There was, however, between the regent and Dubois an abyss. The regent's vices and virtues were those of a gentleman, Dubois's those of a lackey. In vain the regent said to him, with each new favor that he granted, "Dubois, take care; it is only a livery-coat that I am putting on your back." Dubois, who cared about the gift, and not about the manner in which it was given, replied with his apish grimace, "I am your valet, Monseigneur; dress me always the same."

Dubois, however, loved the regent, and was devoted to him. He bore in mind that this powerful hand alone had raised him from the sink in which he had been found, and to which, hated and despised as he was by all, a sign from the master might restore him. He watched, therefore, with a personal interest the hatreds and plots which might reach the prince; and more than once, by the aid of a police often better managed than that of the lieutenant-general, and which extended, by the help of Madame de Tencin, into the highest aristocracy, and by the help of La Fillon, to the lowest grades of society, he had defeated conspiracies of which Messire Voyer d'Argenson had not even heard a whisper.

Therefore the regent, who appreciated the services which Dubois had rendered him, and could still render him, received the ambassador with open arms. As soon as he

saw him, he rose, and contrary to the custom of princes, who generally depreciate the service in order to diminish the reward, "Dubois," said he, joyously, "you are my best friend; and the treaty of the quadruple alliance will be more profitable to King Louis XV. than all the victories of his ancestor, Louis XIV."

"Bravo!" said Dubois, "you do me justice, Monseigneur; but unfortunately every one is not equally grateful."

"Ah, ah!" said the regent; "have you met my mother? She has just left the room."

"Precisely; and she was almost on the point of returning to ask you — in view of the excellent success of my embassy — to give me another, to China or to Persia."

"Well, well, my poor Abbé," replied the prince, laughing, "my mother is full of prejudices, and she will never forgive you for educating her son in the way you did. But don't be troubled; I need you."

"And how is his Majesty?" asked Dubois, with a smile that betrayed a sinister desire. "He was very poorly when I left."

"Well, Abbé, very well," answered the prince, gravely. "God will preserve him to us, I hope, for the happiness of France and the shame of our calumniators."

"And Monseigneur sees him every day as usual?"

"I saw him yesterday, and I even spoke to him of you."

"Bah! and what did you tell him?"

"I told him that in all probability you had just secured the tranquillity of his reign."

"And what did the king answer?"

"What did he answer? He answered, my friend, that he did not think abbés were so useful."

"His Majesty is very witty. And old Villeroy was there, without doubt?"

"As he always is."

"With your permission, I must send that old fellow to look for me at the other end of France some fine morning. His insolence to you begins to tire my patience."

"Leave him alone, Dubois, leave him alone; everything will come in its own time."

"Even my archbishopric?"

"By the way, what is this new folly?"

"New folly, Monseigneur! On my honor, nothing can be more serious."

"What! that letter from the King of England, which asks me for an archbishopric for you —"

"Did your Highness not recognize the style?"

"You dictated it, you rascal!"

"To Néricault Destouches, who got the king to sign it."

"And the king signed it like that, without saying anything?"

"Exactly. 'You wish,' said he to our poet, 'that a Protestant prince should interfere to make an archbishop in France. The regent will read my recommendation, will laugh at it, and pay no attention to it.' 'Yes, yes, Sire,' replied Destouches, who has more wit than he puts into his verses, 'the regent will laugh at it; but after laughing at it he will do what your Majesty asks.'"

"Destouches was mistaken."

"Destouches never spoke more truly, Monseigneur."

"You an archbishop! King George would deserve that, in return, I should point out to him some rascal like you for the archbishopric of York when it becomes vacant."

"I defy you to find my equal. I know but one man —"

"And who is he? I should like to know him."

"Oh, it is useless, he is already placed; and as his place is good, he would not change it for all the archbishoprics in the world."

"Insolent!"

"With whom are you angry, Monseigneur?"

"With a fellow who wants to be an archbishop, and who has never yet officiated at the communion table."

"I shall be all the better prepared."

"But the subdeaconship, the deaconship, the priesthood?"

"Bah! We will find somebody, — some second Jean des Entomeures, who will despatch all that in an hour."

"I defy you to find him."

"It is already done."

"And who is it?"

"Your first almoner, the Bishop of Nantes, Tressan."

"The fellow has an answer for everything! But your marriage?"

"My marriage!"

"Yes, Madame Dubois."

"Madame Dubois! Who is that?"

"What, fellow, have you assassinated her?"

"Monseigneur forgets that it is only three days since he gave her her quarter's pension."

"And if she should oppose your archbishopric?"

"I defy her; she has no proofs."

"She may get a copy of the marriage certificate."

"There is no copy without an original."

"And the original?"

"Here it is," said Dubois, drawing from his pocket a little paper, containing a pinch of ashes.

"What! and are you not afraid that I shall send you to the galleys?"

"If you wish to do so, now is the time, for I hear the lieutenant of police speaking in the antechamber."

"Who sent for him?"

"I did."

"What for?"

"To give him a scolding."

"For what reason?"

"You will hear. It is understood then, — I am an archbishop."

"And have you already chosen your archbishopric?"

"Yes, I take Cambrai."

"*Peste!* you are not hard to please?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* it is not for the profit; it is for the honor of succeeding Fénelon."

"Shall we have a new Telemachus?

"Yes, if your Highness will find me a Penelope in the kingdom?"

"Apropos of Penelope, you know that Madame de Sabran —"

"I know all."

"Ah, Abbé; your police, then, is as good as ever?"

"You shall judge."

Dubois stretched out his hand, rang the bell, and a messenger appeared.

"Send the lieutenant-general," said Dubois.

"But, Abbé, it seems to me that you are giving orders here!"

"It is for your good, Monseigneur; allow me."

"Well, well!" said the regent; "one must be indulgent to new-comers."

Messire Voyer d'Argenson entered. He was as ugly as Dubois, but his ugliness was of a very different kind. He was tall, thick, and heavy; he wore an immense wig, had great bushy eyebrows, and was invariably taken for

the Devil by children who saw him for the first time. But with all this, he was supple, active, skilful, cunning, and acquitted himself of his official functions conscientiously when not diverted from his nocturnal duties by some attraction of gallantry.

"Messire d'Argenson," said Dubois, without even leaving the lieutenant-general time to finish his bow, "Monseigneur, who has no secrets from me, has sent for you that you may tell me in what costume he went out last night, in what house he passed the evening, and what happened to him on leaving it. I should not need to ask these questions if I had not just arrived from London; but you understand that as I travelled post from Calais, I know nothing."

"But," said D'Argenson, who thought these questions concealed some snare, "did anything extraordinary happen last evening? I confess I received no report; I hope no accident happened to Monseigneur?"

"Oh, no, none; only Monseigneur, who went out at eight o'clock in the evening, as a French guard, to sup with Madame de Sabran, was nearly carried off on leaving her house."

"Carried off!" cried D'Argenson, turning pale, while the regent could not restrain a cry of astonishment. "Carried off! and by whom?"

"Ah!" said Dubois, "that is what we do not know, and what you ought to know, Messire d'Argenson, if you had not passed your time that night at the convent of the Madeleine de Traisnel instead of in the work of the police."

"What, D'Argenson! you, a grave magistrate, give such an example!" said the regent, laughing. "Never mind, I will receive you well if you come, as you have already done in the time of the late king, to bring me at the end of the year a journal of my acts."

"Monseigneur," said the lieutenant, stammering, "I hope your Highness does not believe a word of what the Abbé Dubois says."

"What! instead of being humiliated by your ignorance, you give me the lie! Monseigneur, I will take you to D'Argenson's seraglio, — an abbess of twenty-six years, and novices of fifteen; a boudoir in India chintz, and cells hung with tapestry. Oh, Monsieur le Lieutenant de Police knows how to do things well."

The regent held his sides, laughing, seeing D'Argenson's disturbed face.

"But," replied the lieutenant of police, trying to bring back the conversation to the less disagreeable though, for him, more humiliating subject, "there is not much merit, Abbé, in your knowing the details of an event which doubtless Monseigneur himself told you."

"On my honor, D'Argenson," said the regent, "I did not tell him a word of it."

"Listen, Lieutenant. Is it Monseigneur also who told me the story of the novice of the Faubourg St. Marceau, whom you so nearly carried off over the convent walls? Is it Monseigneur who told me of that house which you have had built under a false name, against the wall of the convent of the Madeleine, so that you can enter at all hours by a door hidden in a closet, and which opens on the sacristy of the chapel of Saint Mark, your patron? No, no; all that, my dear Lieutenant, is the infancy of the art, and he who only knew this would not, I am sure, be worthy to undo the lacing of your shoes."

"Listen, Abbé," replied the lieutenant of police, with a grave air; "if all you have told me about Monseigneur is true, the affair is serious, and I am in the wrong not to know it, if any one does. But there is no time lost;

we will find the culprits and punish them as they deserve."

"But," said the regent, "you must not attach too much importance to this; they were probably some drunken officers who wished to play a joke on one of their comrades."

"It is a conspiracy, pure and simple, Monseigneur," replied Dubois, "which emanates from the Spanish embassy, passing through the Arsenal to reach the Palais Royal."

"Again, Dubois?"

"Always, Monseigneur."

"And you, D'Argenson, what is your opinion?"

"That your enemies are capable of anything, Monseigneur; but we will mar their plots, whatever they may be,—I give you my word."

At this moment the door opened, and the Duc du Maine was announced, who came to attend the council, and whose privilege it was, as prince of the blood, not to be kept waiting. He advanced with that timid and uneasy air which was natural to him, casting a side-glance over the three persons in whose presence he found himself, as though to discover what subject they were discussing at the moment of his arrival. The regent understood his thought.

"Welcome, my cousin," said he; "these two bad fellows — whom you know —have just been assuring me that you are conspiring against me."

The Duc du Maine turned as pale as death, and was obliged to lean for support on the crutch-shaped stick which he carried.

"And I hope, Monseigneur," he replied in a voice which he vainly endeavored to render firm, "that you did not give ear to such a calumny."

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, no!" replied the regent, negligently; "but they are obstinate, and declare that they will take you one day in the act. I put no faith in their story, but at any rate, I give you warning; be on your guard against them, for they are clever fellows, I warrant you."

The Duc du Maine opened his mouth to give utterance to some commonplace excuse, when the door opened again, and the usher announced successively the Duc de Bourbon, the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Saint-Simon, the Duc de Guiche, captain of the guards, the Duc de Noailles, president of the council of finance, the Duc d'Antin, superintendent of ships, the Maréchal d'Uxelles, president of the council of foreign affairs, the Bishop of Troyes, the Marquis de Lavrillière, the Marquis d'Effiat, the Duc de Laforce, the Marquis de Torcy, and the marshals De Villeroy, D'Estrées, De Villars, and De Bezons.

As these grave personages were gathered together to deliberate upon the treaty of the quadruple alliance brought from London by Dubois, and as the treaty of the quadruple alliance figures only secondarily in this history, our readers will excuse our leaving the sumptuous reception-room in the Palais Royal, to lead them back to the attic in the Rue du Temps-Perdu.

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